

JUNE, 1921

35 Cents

# The SMART SET

*Edited by  
George Jean Nathan  
and  
H.L. Mencken.*



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HALF A HUNDRED BURLESQUES, EPIGRAMS, POEMS, SHORT SATIRES, ETC.

Manuscripts must be addressed, "Editors of THE SMART SET"

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 YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION \$4.00 SINGLE COPIES 35 CENTS

Issued Monthly by Smart Set Company, Inc., 25 West 45th Street, New York

Entered as second class mail matter, March 27, 1900, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under act of March 3, 1879  
 Eltinge F. Warner, Pres. and Treas. George Jean Nathan, Sec.

Western Advertising Office, Wrigley Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

MAY 18 1921

©CLB493760

Vol. LXV

JUNE, 1921

No. 2

*The*  
**SMART SET**  
*The*  
*Aristocrat*  
*Among*  
*Magazines*



## South Wind

*By George O'Neil*

TONIGHT the wind is lyrical again  
With faint disturbing odours of the loam  
Blown from the southland where a touch of rain  
Has changed an orchard to a stretch of foam.

The barren boughs beyond my window mark  
A rhythmic ecstasy as though they knew  
The meaning of this softness in the dark  
And how the rain struck . . . and the magic grew . . .

The stars cloud and a secret is not clear;  
What is this clarion for every bud?  
Breathless, I listen, but I cannot hear  
Even the wind above my singing blood.



# A Panorama of Holy Clerks

*By Major Owen Hatteras*

**F**FIFTH AVENUE rectors preaching to congregations made up of profiteers, defendants in salacious divorce suits and former Zionists, their faces glistening brilliantly with the love of God. Evangelists of strange, incomprehensible cults whooping and bawling at two or three half-witted old women and half a dozen scared little girls in corrugated iron tabernacles down near the railroad yards. Mormon missionaries pulling door-bells in Wheeling, W. Va., and Little Rock, Ark., and handing naughty-looking tracts to giggling servant girls. Baptist doctors of divinity calling upon John the Baptist and John D. Rockefeller to bear witness that the unducked will sweat in hell forevermore. Methodist candidates for the sacred frock, sent out to preach trial sermons to backward churches in the mail-order belt, proving magnificently in one hour that Darwin was an ignoramus and Huxley a scoundrel. Irish priests denouncing Lloyd-George. Rabbis denouncing Henry Ford. Presbyterians denouncing Flo Ziegfeld. Fashionable divines officiating at gaudy home weddings, their ears alert for the popping of corks. Street evangelists in Zanesville, O., trying to

convince a cop and five newsboys that no man will be saved unless his heart is wholly purged of sin. Missionaries in smelly gospel-shops along the waterfront, expounding the doctrine of the atonement to boozy Norwegian sailors, half of them sound asleep. Cadaverous high-church Episcopalians. Little fat Lutherans with the air of prosperous cheesemongers. Dunkards with celluloid collars and no neckties. Southern Methodists who still believe in slavery. Former plumbers, threshing-machine engineers and horse doctors turned into United Brethren bishops. Missionaries collecting money from the mill children in Raleigh, N. C., to convert the Spaniards and Italians to Calvinism. Episcopal archdeacons cultivating the broad English *a*. Swedenborgians trying to explain the "Arcana Coelestia" to flabbergasted newspaper reporters. Polish clergymen leaping out of the windows at Polish weddings in Johnstown, Pa., hoping that the half-dozen beer bottles won't hit them. Methodists pulling wires for bishoprics. Quakers foreclosing mortgages. Baptists busy among the women. . . . Now and then a holy clerk who honestly believes in and preaches Christianity.





# The Betrayal

[A Complete Novelette]

By L. M. Hussey

## CHAPTER I

IN spite of her irritation, Elena was amused by Clemencia's singing. Clemencia sat at the piano, playing her own accompaniment; her plump fingers ran over the keys like diminutive cherubs in an awkward gambol. Her head was tilted back in an emotional gesture, whilst her rounded lips gave exit to the amorous, sad song; her great, fat shoulders heaved like frozen billows.

*Soñé vagar por bosques de palmeras  
Donde las hadas templan mi laúd,  
Ellas me han dicho que conmigo sueñas,  
Que me haran inmortal, si me  
amas tú.*

Those were pretty words, Elena thought; it was a sweet idea—the immortality conferred by a fairy love, but Clemencia made them ridiculous. Nevertheless, Elena listened with an outward aspect of pleasure and was angered by the impolite conversation of three men talking together at the farther end of the *sala*.

One of the men was Pio Ayala, her husband. They talked with an open disregard of Clemencia's singing; their voices mingled with the thin plaint of her song like gross inharmonies. Although she could not hear the words, Elena could guess the general trend of their conversation, and from moment to moment little shocks of apprehensive fear mingled with her irritation.

Clemencia mounted to the last wailing note and the song was over. It was followed at once by a good-natured

clapping of hands. Elena joined in, and as she stood smiling, a little apart from her guests, little Luisa Navas approached her, a sentimental rapture in her eyes.

"Oh, Elena!" she cried, seizing the hands of her older friend, "I was thinking, while Clemencia was singing, about you, how happy you must be!"

She paused for a moment, and her tiny, childlike face became clouded with a shadow of passing grief.

"I hate to hear those songs about love. Oh, Elena, I wish I had a lover!"

The older woman laughed at her little friend's naiveté, and, with a certain irrationality, was proud to be envied. She unconsciously turned her head and looked across the room to the corner where her husband was still talking eagerly with his two companions. Bringing her eyes back to the girl's face, she spoke with a smile.

"You've half a dozen lovers, chica! What is the matter with you?"

"Ay! I don't love any of them!" Luisa cried, and then, when Señora Ayala laughed, she joined her.

In that moment the two women were well contrasted, for they stood somewhat apart from the others, like prominent figures in a populous painting. The *mesonero* had just come in from the buffet with a tray of liqueurs and the men were crowding about him. The women had not yet detached themselves from Clemencia, who was popular, not for her voice, but for her wealth.

Luisa, a tiny girl, seemed childlike standing near the slim tallness of her older friend.

Luisa's type was a common one—the

romantic girl only recently liberated from a convent. Elena, her friend, was less usual. Physically, she was taller than most women. In consonance with her slender body, her face was rather long, a fact she liked to stress by dressing her black hair in two thick, sweeping bands that covered her ears and a part of either cheek like swarthy leaves enclosing a flower. Her nose was well-defined; her lips carved out admirably, but without any sensuous pout; her eyes were very large. Once, with her slimness of figure, and her large eyes dominating her rather thin face, she had possessed an ethereal appearance. It was not easy now, however, after three years of marriage, to define the quality you found in her aspect.

Something new had come into her face; it was not a maturity, but a maturing. It was not an assured face, nor a contented nor a weak one; it suggested an inner uncertainty, like the uncertainty of a strong nature confronted with a problem for which no means of disposal had suggested themselves.

After a few minutes Luisa left her and she stood alone again, looking across the noisy *sala* at the earnest figure of her husband. He was spoiling her *fiestecita*, spoiling her pleasure in it, she knew that. All evening, at each instant's opportunity, she had been preoccupied with him and found herself watching him with a vague, distracted anxiety. She lacked a whole heart to enjoy the conversation of her friends. Now, whilst the others were talking and it was her duty to join them, she stood apart, staring at Ayala.

His companions, Delgado Correa, with his disproportionate head, and Maizo, with his broad, repulsive face, frightened her. She was not afraid of the men themselves—Delgado Correa was no better than a fool and Maizo was a contemptible adventurer—but Ayala's association with them troubled her like the trouble of a mother who finds her son in bad company. She sighed. When would Ayala forget his insane ambitions? What stupidity!

Then, after a moment, she realized her discourtesy and at once joined the group of her guests. Out of the corners of her distracted eyes she saw her husband break away from Maizo and Delgado Correa and at once she felt the sort of relief that follows the relaxing of a marked tension.

Little Luisa Navas was talking to her again, and she answered with small nods and smiles. These acknowledgments sufficed Luisa, who talked with the easy flow of a brook, fed by trivial but lasting springs.

Nearby, Clemencia, the singer, and old Señora Mardones, who was distinguished by the fact that she was known to beat her husband, were whispering into each other's faces like conspirators in a popular melodrama. They had found a new scandal, Elena decided. Behind Clemencia, leaning over the back of a frail, gilded chair, a young man was addressing two older women, who evidently found him amusing, for their laughter trilled out repeatedly.

Beyond the convivial young man was another, a younger man, whom Elena had been forced to observe all evening, half in scorn, half in annoyance. He was the son of old Hermoso Figueredo, a friend of the President, and this boy had recently been appointed *secretario privado*.

Old Figueredo had brought him there that evening. Soon after his appearance Elena observed that he talked to no one, observed no one—no one save herself, with whom he seemed grotesquely enchanted. He stared at her as if she were a vision of incredible delight. He sighed, he dropped his glance whenever she looked at him, his eyes returned to the regard of her whenever the chance allowed.

This was not essentially a novel experience. One or twice before, since her marriage, young men had been romantically attracted to her and had stared at her with this same mute, bovine softness; she had laughed at them. Tonight she wished that old Figueredo had kept his romantic son at

home, for amusement was foreign to her mood.

She frowned and forgot the boy, sweeping her eyes over the animated faces of her guests.

Surrounding the immediate groups of her guests, moving in and out among them like vivified figures in a colourful tapestry, came and went all the others present at Elena's *fiestecita*. They smiled and laughed, whispered and talked loudly; everyone was gay. Elena, although she was not unhappy, could not be gay. She could not, as the others seemed to, feel secure.

A young man joined them; he began to talk to little Luisa. Elena left them together and walking toward the door of the *sala*, found herself face to face with Vicente Maizo, who had just come in from the buffet.

He was taller than Elena, and the great breadth of his shoulders, the solidity of his neck and head, made him appear extraordinarily massive beside her, made her seem frail. He bowed with a thick inclination of his body, and his lips, wanting the large moustaches of custom, were drawn back into a somewhat ferocious smile.

"Señora," he said, "this is the first moment that I've found to speak with you. Forgive me. Your husband has made me neglect my duty—and pleasure."

Elena knew that fundamentally she found him contemptuous, but near at hand he always impressed her, and it was not easy to be frank with him. She struggled to retain her sincerity.

"Now that we have the chance to talk," she said, speaking in a low voice, "I want to ask you, señor, why you find my husband so fascinating?"

Maizo was surprised and even his face showed surprise. For a moment his features had the expression of one who has been unexpectedly slapped in the course of a politely conventional encounter. Elena knew that she had been abrupt, and for just an instant she feared that Maizo would say something directly ironic, even insulting.

But he recovered his aplomb and his ferocious smile persisted.

"You noticed our conference, señora? A wife's watchful eyes! I am glad I am not a woman in this case. Yes, Señor Ayala is fascinating as you say, and added to that, we have projects together!"

"What I feared!" exclaimed Elena, tensely.

"How frank you are, señora! I will be frank enough then to ask you a direct question. Do you dislike me? Or, in other words, why do you dislike me?"

Elena opened her large eyes widely, and for an instant looked straight into the small, jet pupils of the man confronting her. Her uneasiness in his presence had subsided. In her swift, full glance she seemed to measure him.

"I scarcely know you, señor," she said. "I wasn't thinking of you in a personal way. I was thinking of what you stand for . . . your activities . . ."

She hesitated an instant and then added:

"A woman wants security."

"Ah, señora, I have no designs upon your security!"

"You make me uneasy. I have heard of you Señor Maizo. You live by chance, hazards. I don't want to be carried into them. Well, I don't so much want security as to see where I'm going. I don't want to ride behind your chariot, señor! You worry me."

Maizo laughed; his laughing was a form of irregular growling.

"You mustn't be uneasy," he said. "We were only entertaining ourselves with theories. Señor Ayala is interested in the theories of government. That's a legitimate interest, señora."

Elena moved her hands about impatiently, as if to brush away, like worrying insects, the evasions of his words. Before she could speak again a laughing couple joined with the two and the intimacy of their conversation was broken.

## CHAPTER II

PRESENTLY her guests began to leave, singly, in couples, in groups. Delgado Correa and Vicente Maizo left together; Ayala accompanied them and bowed them out. Little Luisa Navas was one of the last to go and in saying good-bye she stood holding Elena's hands and looking up into her face like an adoring child.

Just for a second Elena was irritated. The envious admiration of the romantic child annoyed her, because she knew it to be illusory; she saw no reason to be envied. Then, her mind relenting, she pressed the child's hands and kissed her cheeks and Luisa whispered that she had spent a lovely evening; they parted.

Across the *sala* young Figueredo, another romantic, still lingered, supping the sight of her like a wine. She glanced at him, he approached, bowed over her hand, muttered incoherently, and was gone. As he disappeared from the *sala* Elena thought that the arrangements of life were endlessly inappropriate, and it came to her that there was very little rhythm in events, but that circumstances voiced themselves in stumbling prose, badly phrased. There had just passed out of the *sala* two excessively young romantics. Luisa mourned for a lover; young Figueredo madly cast his eyes at an impossible hope. Suitable to each other, these two ignored each other.

Elena walked back into the deserted *sala*, from which the *mesonero* was gathering up empty liqueur glasses. Ayala had gone to the piano and he was sitting before the rows of white and black keys picking out a tune with one finger. He did not look up as Elena crossed the room and stood near him.

She studied his profile for a moment and observed, as she had observed many times before, that he was a handsome fellow. His features were carved out with a cleaner definition than those of most of the men of her country. Evidently his blood ran a clear Spanish strain without dilution

with the native blood, the dilutant would have thickened his lips, flattened his face, clouded his skin and set his eyes aslant. With his sharp features and slim, tall body he might have been her brother. He was indeed a handsome fellow. It surprised her now that she could admit this without feeling a thrill.

She admitted it impersonally, like the observation of a fact made in the calm scientific temper that never involves the emotions. Tonight she almost felt that she was indifferent to his appearance, even indifferent to him—and, irrationally, she was troubled about him.

"Pio," she said, "tell me what you are thinking."

He continued to pick out the tune upon the double rank of keys and he still kept his eyes upon this work, as if it were significant and full of importance.

"Nothing," he answered, negligently.

"Oh, I know you're thinking about something, and I want to know. Pio, I'm worried."

He turned about abruptly and looked up into her earnest, widely opened eyes.

"No, *amorcito*, you're not worried? Tell me, what do you mean?"

"Well, I'm worried because I saw you so interested in Vicente Maizo, and that fellow Correa. I know their histories; they are schemers. I know how lucky they have always been themselves, but half a dozen men are in prison because of listening to their schemes. It worries me!"

Ayala's face became stern and he looked at his wife with reproof in his eyes.

"Vicente Maizo is a patriot!" he said.

Before she could comment or object, he stood up and spoke to her again.

"It is exactly as Delgado Correa points out and Vicente Maizo himself believes—a man of my station owes something to himself and to the state. I have no necessity and no occasion, as you know, to work; I belong, just



on account of my position, to the governing class. You don't understand and feel this because you are a woman . . ."

Elena moved her thin shoulders in a faint protest, but her husband, unnoticed, continued.

"I think that Delgado Correa is an inspired man. Look at the man himself—a small, infirm body, an enormous, intellectual head. The real opposite of Maizo. Maizo is a patriot and a man of tremendous energy, but Delgado Correa is a brain!"

Ayala's cheeks, ordinarily colourless, flushed red and his breathing became audible, as if there were thoughts behind his words that intoxicated him, hastened the pace of his blood.

"He makes me see something, Elena, that I have never quite seen before. I explain this to you, although I doubt that you will understand. He makes me see, to speak briefly, a large duty, in short, a patriotic duty. After the inspiration I've had from Delgado Correa I will never find it possible to my conscience to sit in this room, in this house, and be content to see hours, days, months, a whole life-time, indeed, pass away from me whilst there's oppression in my native land and men of low ideals turn the destiny of a people into mean courses. It's almost as if I'd had a light, a commandant. I have the means to help, and the time. I must do my whole duty with all my heart!"

His voice had grown in power and vibrancy as he spoke and in the end his words came swiftly, with a rhythm of conviction that stirred Elena herself, for an instant. The passionate fervour of his words had, in her senses, a momentary translation into the personal passion of their early ardour, the first months of their love. Then she reacted, reacted with fear and despair, both appalling.

He had gone further than her dreams! What a catastrophe! She knew him so well now, after the three years built up of days and days together, knew his weaknesses and easy

enthusiasms, his romantic soul, the follies of his romanticism. Instinctively she had always feared this. It was such a common, pitifully repeated history. Somewhere, in every year of her country's history, there was a wealthy, enthusiastic dupe to play his fortunes into the hands of the existent Delgado Correas, Vicente Maizos—and the professional adventurers were always clever enough to clear themselves when their intrigues failed. She remembered three or four men—the idealists—of well-grown, honourable families who had grown old and died pitifully as political prisoners.

Ayala was still talking, but she scarcely heard him now; her eyes were glowing wide with consternation.

He was engrossed with his own enthusiasm, drunken with the high sound of his own words. He spoke of duty, patriotism, the revivification of the State, a government of justice, severing the bonds of national slavery. He scarcely thought of his wife, save as a mute audience, undoubtedly impressed by his eloquence. She was a woman, she did not understand. Nevertheless, he saw that she was listening and that gratified him.

She listened whilst his words assailed her in meaningless phrases. His words were like a fog and she forced her thoughts through this obscurity with an effort that was almost physical. Wonder was mingled with her consternation; she wondered at his seriousness and enthusiasm. She was insensible to the glories of his opportunity, but saw only the consequences, which were held to be inevitable. She did not believe in him. She knew him too well to see him as a second Bolivar, a great Liberator. His talk of liberation was maddeningly irrational, for there was no one, nothing to liberate. He was safe, they were both safe, and he proceeded to run madly into the disasters of political intrigue like a man in search of an insane martyrdom.

His voice ceased. At once Elena seized his hands and pressing them

tight in her own, spoke with a swift urgency.

"*Pio, mi amor,*" she said, "don't be carried away by Maizo; you know what that sort of thing leads to. No one is oppressing us; whom do you want to set free from oppression? Oh, Santa Maria! this is the maddest country in the world! The idea of revolution is like a terrible disease here. Pio! Don't see Delgado Correa any more!"

Ayala looked at her strained face, first with a responding scowl, then with a slowly forming smile. He shrugged his shoulders. He removed his cigarette case and lighted one of the slender white cylinders.

"How serious you must have been as a little girl, *amorcito,*" he said, "I wish I had known you then! But go to bed now, *mijita.* Your *fiestecita* has upset your nerves."

He touched her shoulder with a casual caress; for a moment she did not move and hardly seemed to breathe; she was like a marble woman. Then drawing in a long breath, she turned away and moved toward the door. Ayala resumed his seat at the piano and began to pick out the tune again with one clumsy finger.

### CHAPTER III

ELENA went to her room in an immediate mood of resignation and indifference. Her maid, who had been sleeping, appeared rubbing her eyes like a child roused up out of a deep slumber. Elena seated herself at the oval mirror of her gilt dressing table and the maid unfastened her gown and loosened her hair. Elena was almost unconscious of her services.

She was wondering now why she had reacted so passionately to Ayala's proposed folly. No doubt because she had felt it coming instinctively, almost from the beginning of her life with him. She had divined him capable of folly; this was the folly that would be common to a man of his means and station.

But surely, she now thought, it did

not matter to her what Ayala did. He could plan heroisms and revolts with Delgado Correa, whom she despised, and Maizo, whom she certainly did not fear, and finally the President would seize him, as plotters were seized inevitably, and his fate after that was beyond her concern. For the first time she squarely faced the fact that she did not love Ayala; she admitted it to herself and was surprised that this admission brought no stirring of her senses, no regret, no sentiment, no longing.

Then, she thought, it was curious to find herself loveless, with this easy, unemotional admission. Ayala was not unworthy of love, and, in the calm way that men finally come to care for their wives, he doubtless held her in precious regard. He was kind to her, he was good to her, and he was no more contemptuous of her than she had observed other men to be contemptuous of their women. He held her in an affectionate and also a protecting contempt.

But contempt killed her emotions. Tonight she recognized this fact very clearly, and even regretted it as an introspective person regrets the discovery of a fundamental want of character. There was something deeply rebellious in her soul; she found herself different from the other women of her country. They accepted their traditional position without emotional rebellion, but she was unable to accept it. She saw herself playing an unsuitable rôle, like an actor badly cast. She knew she should be submissive, yet she felt strong; she recognized the duty of obedience, yet she wished to command.

Her maid had gathered up the long swarthy strands of her hair into a great twisted braid, and now she was left alone in the room, still seated as before. She did not feel tired. She felt, indeed, stimulated, as if the clearness of her thoughts reacted in her body like an enlivening wine.

Now it seemed to her that she had been unfair with Ayala. When, in his



phrases of eloquent intoxication, he had spoken of his great illusions, she had found him wholly irrational; his talk was wild incoherency. Well, it was wrong to regard his purpose so harshly, for after all, he was scarcely original enough to be irrational. He was, indeed, strictly conventional and his purposes, however foolish, were well-recognized, and honoured by many precedents and long tradition.

Something ran in the blood of such men that made them the victims of fine phrases. However selfish might be the motives of Correa and Maizo, there was always a group of unselfish idealists who hazarded their fortunes and security in perennial enterprises of political intrigue. Now Ayala was about to repeat the silly and tragic history of these attempts.

Elena shrugged her shoulders. It was true, Ayala's words were true—she did not understand.

Arising, she crossed the room meditatively, turned out the light, and slipped quietly into bed. Sleep came to her swiftly.

#### CHAPTER IV

SHE slept soundly, but when she awoke in the morning she did not feel comfortably refreshed. In spite of her presumptive resignation she had gone to sleep with a trouble on her mind and there it had lain over night like a stagnant pool in her subconscious thoughts.

The night before, turning out her light and slipping into bed, she had resolved against further concern with her husband's revolutionary follies. Now, in the morning, making her toilet, she renewed this resolve, but it did not quiet the vague uneasiness that lived in these moments like a foreign shadow.

She took breakfast with Ayala in the *patio*, where a small table was laid under a group of palms. Ayala was already waiting for her; he kissed her cheeks when she drew close to him. They sat down together.

He was in a gay, reminiscent humour. He began to tell about a fight between two boys of well-known families that was reported in the morning paper and this led him to speak of his own escapades when he had been a boy. He told Elena of how, when he was twelve and living on his father's plantation, he had plotted to be a pirate. There was a lake on the plantation, he told her, and the natives built their huts and made their clearings around the shores of the lake. Here he had built a canoe and with two native boys, who were the subordinate desperados of his enterprises, he said that he used to cruise the lake at nights and steal this or that useless thing from the clearings about the huts. He told of the tremendous beating his father gave him when his depredations were discovered.

Elena watched him as he talked and involuntarily she admired his high spirits, his boyish enthusiasm that was obviously one with the enthusiasm that made him a pirate years ago. His dark eyes glittered like black onyx, his curly black hair was tossed here and there on his head with the energy of his recital. For a moment Elena found herself in deep sympathy with him, bound to him by a subtle, indissoluble attachment that was the result of their thousand intimacies together. It was a feeling of oneness she could not deny, as if, having lived so many hours with this man, a rigid fate asserted its supremacy, fixing her fortunes with his fortunes forever.

Her feeling, profound as it was in the seconds when she experienced it, was transient, for the door of the *corredor* opened and the *mesonero* admitted early visitors to the *patio*. Breakfast was finished, the table had been cleared. Ayala arose, breaking off his recital abruptly, and advanced to meet the visitors.

With a shock of her former alarm Elena recognized Maizo, gross and expansive, and Delgado Correa, wagging his disproportionate head like a balloon mounted on a stalk, and between them was a fat, solid, brigandish looking

fellow carrying an enormous hat which must have come from Mexico. She had never seen this man before.

Her husband brought the visitors to the table, where they bowed with great politeness. The short, fat man was introduced as General Salas, and he acknowledged the introduction with an additional bow and a tremendous sweep of his huge Mexican hat that both amused and disgusted Elena. A few conventional words were spoken and then Ayala took his visitors to the smoking room, and Elena was left alone in the *patio*.

Her maid appeared, hurrying across the court from the kitchen, whence she had come, no doubt, on some little business of her own. Elena called to her and the maid, turning, approached her mistress.

"Consuela," Elena asked, "did you see the visitors who just went in with Señor Ayala?"

"Yes, Misia, I saw them," the girl answered.

"Well did you see that fat man, Consuela? He calls himself a general!"

The maid, quick to please, caught her mistress' mood.

"Ay!" she cried, disdainfully, "he is very fat!"

"Very ridiculous, I think. Yes Consuela, remember that the men of our country are terribly ridiculous. Every other one of them is a General, or a Chief of this or that; there are no men left for followers, their followers are all imaginary."

"Si, Misia."

The girl hesitated a moment and then, finding that her mistress had nothing further to impart, continued across the court and entered the house. Elena still stood under the palms. The great contempt in her heart embraced, like withering arms, the whole male sex. She was excluded by tradition, she thought, from the enterprises of men, and her spirit rebelled as if she were the protagonist of feministic revolt. The follies of her husband would react upon her fortunes with inevitable hurt, but her rôle was the unalterable

rôle of resignation and acceptance. Thinking clearly, it came to her that she did not want a man's grant of action conferred upon her, she did not want the freedom to commit follies of her own; she wanted, hopelessly of course, a godlike power of negation, the power to pronounce a final *no* to all the irrational activities that were beginning, unwanted, in her life.

The helplessness of her position depressed her extraordinarily, and suddenly she felt the necessity of a confidant. In whom could she confide? There was no woman who could understand her. Clemencia Martinez had never known a reality in her life; little Luisa Navas lived with dreams of love. Like these, she found each other name negligible in her want.

Slowly crossing the *patio*, she entered her room—and then decided that she would visit her father. She had not been to her father's house for several weeks. She could talk to him; it was quite natural to look upon him as a confidant. Just then she found herself admiring him with a deep emotion of loving pride, for he was a man whose discretions were noteworthy. He had never put himself in the way of a disaster. How successfully he had lived!

She opened her bureau and took out her black mantilla which she draped over her head and shoulders. As she stepped quickly to the door the lace ends waved behind her like delicate fluttering wings.

## CHAPTER V

ON the street she hurried as if she were entrusted with a mission that could not be postponed, and all the while she wondered why she had not thought of her father before, why she neglected him so much. An immense homesickness came to her, like the nostalgia she had known during the first months of her marriage, in spite of her illusive happiness then. Ayala was a stranger, her married life was an unreality, but all the old days, all

the hours in her old home, the rooms, the *patio*, the *corredor* with palms in cement boxes, and the figure of her father moving like a patriarch in this setting, were poignantly real.

The two houses were not far apart and Elena reached her father's home in a few moments. The front door was standing open; she passed into the *corredor* and here she was greeted by Buenaventura, her father's old Indian servant. Buenaventura smiled and grimaced with pleasure, and led her to the study, where she found her father reading one of de Caceres' satiric volumes against religious superstitions.

As she entered he arose at once and squeezed her hands affectionately, whilst she kissed him. He was surprisingly tall, he was thin to the degree of emaciation, and his enormous white beard flowed down over his breast like the plumage of some fabulous bird. From that high, emaciated figure an incongruously sonorous voice issued, a voice that startled the unaccustomed hearer with a strange impression of disbelief in its origin, as if the old man were the mouthpiece for some more robust and invisible presence.

"Ah, niña," he said, "I am happy to see you; I have been thinking about you. See, I've been reading one of the works of our great historian, whom you know very well. You remember this book, don't you, Elena?"

She smiled with a warm smile and tender memories came to her as she remembered how these heavy volumes of Nuñas de Caceres had figured like monolithic ogres in her childish hours.

"Oh, yes, father," she cried. "I remember these books very well indeed. You used to make me read them before I was ten years old. The big words frightened me. I never understood a single sentence."

The old man resumed his chair, making, meanwhile, deprecating gestures with his skinny hands.

"You exaggerate; you forget."

Elena sat down near him.

He began to talk, taking up the

thread of his reading, as if his daughter were commonly in the house, and therefore no little matters of greeting, of question and answer, were expected to pass between them.

"This afternoon," he said, "de Caceres brings back to my mind an idea I've held for many years. It is that the classifications of men are very incomplete; that is to say classifications into race, or classifications on the basis of language, or the basis of cephalic index, colour or eyes and hair and so forth, are all too limited. We need, as I have always perceived, an entire system of psychological classification, a whole system of phylum, genus, class, order, sub-order based upon comparative intelligence . . ."

Elena stirred uneasily in her chair; she recognized the beginning of a garrulous mood. How could she have forgotten so easily her father's well-known failing?

"The lack of such a system of classification," he went on, "has led to the fallacies that are now universally abroad in the world in the shape of democratic theories, the literal equality of man. Niña, it is easy for zoologists to measure the difference between an anthropoid ape and a human being; physically they fall into two sub-orders, anthropodæ and anthropinæ. No one confuses them. No one extends the theories of democracy to include both. Now . . ."

"Father," interrupted Elena, "I want to talk to you about Pio."

The old man's lips curved into a ghoulish, thin smile.

"In a moment I will use Pio as an example," he said. "The difficulty of the intellectual classification of man is discovered in the fact that no scientific system of mensurating, calculating, ordinating, reducing to logarithms and trigonometric sines and cosines the psychic differences of men has been evolved. In other words, niña, we are told that a Tyrolese peasant is racially different from a Scandinavian because he has a ratio of length of head to breadth of head that figures at 80

or over, whereas the Scandinavian, by the same measurements, shows a figure of 78 or less. This is meritoriously simple; it gives one the æsthetic pleasure of all simple, beautiful arrangements. Some such simplicity of psychic measurement will one day be evolved so that we will be able to demonstrate by a system of especially delicate psychic measurements the absolute difference in sub-orders between a man, let us say like Calderon, who could write *La Vida es Sueño*, and on the other hand our own South American Rodo, who writes essays to arouse the sentimentalities."

Elena, assailed by an argument she did not understand, tortured by a perplexity she had come to share, writhed in her chair like an inquisitorial victim. Her father's grandiose words assaulted her ears with the maddening cumulative effect of water dripping drop by drop upon a heretic's head. Suddenly she flung herself out of the chair, posed in front of the old man with hands outstretched in a dramatic gesture of despair and supplication, and her vibrant voice cut in sharply upon the flow of his interminable sentences like a living sound among the dead repetitions of a perpetual echo.

"Father!" she cried, "I want to talk to you about Pio! I want to tell you about Pio! I am so worried, so afraid! I feel as if all the security had gone out of life, like a person feels in an earthquake when you see the walls of the room open and close and all the pictures turn sideways on their hangers. I never knew what a habit and necessity my security had become! I came to tell you about it, father; I want to find what you think . . ."

The old man looked up at her with keen eyes that seemed to live with a special, incongruous vitality in the emaciated antiquity of his face.

"Tell me, niña," he said.

"You recall Maizo," Elena asked. "Well, I found him friendly with Maizo and Maizo's friends, and thought nothing at first. But only last night, at my *fiestecita*, I found Pio

earnestly talking with Maizo and Delgado Correa and fears came to me suddenly, as if from nowhere. Suppose Vicente Maizo is proposing another revolution, I thought. Pio is silly enough to believe in it. And then, after everyone had gone, Pio began to talk to me about being a patriot, his duty to the State—ay, Santa Maria, I don't know what more! But I know what happens in such adventures. I know what will happen to us!"

The old man did not cease to smile; a kind of intellectual joy overspread his face as if his daughter had, in her passionately personal words, spoken a problem that was only an abstraction to his ears.

"Pio is an idealist," he said. "You must be ready to forgive the mistakes of an idealist. Yes, niña, his course is probably a mistake. It may inconvenience you . . ."

The mildness of his estimate seemed to enrage Elena, as if her acute sensibilities found the colour of red in his words.

"Inconvenience!" she cried with a shrill lift of vocal pitch. "It will ruin him; it will ruin us both. I know how these things come out."

Her father nodded his head in abstracted agreement.

"I have often considered the regrettable psychology of idealists," he said.

"He will be discovered before a blow is struck," Elena interrupted, "and the President will imprison him and confiscate all our property—oh, I never realized before that I've fallen into a habit, a way of living; uncertainties and disasters seem terrible. I want all the rest of my life to feel easy and secure . . ."

"The idealists of our country run, as if by a natural law, to politics. I even believe a man like Maizo, who is an adventurer, we will admit, sometimes acquires a small amount of idealistic frenzy from his associates. I don't doubt he has considered himself a true patriot from time to time, enchanted himself with words."

The old man paused, with his hand



outstretched, and in this familiar gesture Elena saw the folly of her visit, the foolish hope that she might find practical counsel in talk with him. He, above all others, was the man enchanted with words, ravished like a slave of carnal love with the delight of ideas. She knew him so well! In the urge to confide in someone, she had forgotten.

"When I was a boy," he began again, "I read Epictetus and derived from his dissertations a lifelong power of resignation. That would be an excellent quality for you, *niña*. Indeed, it would be of service to any woman born under our traditions. These traditions—"

Elena, pulling her mantilla close over her shoulders turned abruptly toward the door.

"*Adios*, father!" she said.

"Ah? You must go, Elena?"

"Yes. *Adios*."

"Then, *adios*, Elena. Come to me for counsel. The rôle of an octogenarian—"

She heard his sonorous voice finishing out the sentence as she passed out of the room; it still sounded in the *corredor*, although she could not distinguish the individual words.

## CHAPTER VI

SHE reached the street. An immense loneliness possessed her, coupled with a feeling of unreality, that dream sensation which is sometimes the perplexity and torment of waking moments.

Her steps were turned homeward. Now she felt tired and enervated. She wondered why her passions and fears had been so strong, and found nothing tangible to justify their force. A common thing had happened. Her husband was dallying with political ideas. Perhaps he might hazard something. It scarcely concerned her. She had interpreted her fears in terms of her newly admitted love of security—but what was precious, she wondered now, in her security? She was married to a man who no longer moved her

emotions, she lived conventionally, the days passed one after another in a routine free from event—where were the prized illusions in this life?

"I don't care what Pio does," she found herself whispering.

But she was the victim of some fundamental force of opposition that drove her, like an unconscious instrument of fate, to action. Twice she had resigned herself to indifference, and both resignations were frail and unlasting, like dried leaves in the eye of a strong wind.

After the futile visit to her father she went home and took up her usual routine as if nothing had happened to stir her emotions. For several days she arose late each morning, read novels of sophisticated romance, took a long siesta early in the afternoon, received a friend or two after making her toilet, and chattered inconsequential things with her visitors as they sat together in her room, eating dulces purchased from a passing *vendedor*.

Then the flame of her opposition blazed up again as if from a deep and unquenchable fire.

During the few days of her resignation, she had been mainly indifferent to the coming and going of Ayala, although she observed that he was busy. He was like a man who suddenly becomes vastly important to some momentous enterprise. He kept appointments at every hour, held conferences, examined maps, filled sheets of note-paper with diagrams, stratagems, columns of figures.

Then, one evening, he remained at home, alone with Elena, as if all his scurry and activity were definitely concluded.

She was sitting in the *patio*, by herself. The only light that reached her came down from the stars, so that in the dimness of the *patio* her slender figure became ethereal, as if the stillness of mystery of the tropical night had sublimed what was earthly from her body.

She was sitting there in a romantic mood that, coming so seldom in these

days, she now indulged as a luxurious visitation. She was recreating certain old dreams. They did not enter into her mind with the vital freshness of dreams that come with a faith in their fulfilment, but as shadows of old dreams, like sweet ghosts. She remembered the hopes she used to have, she remembered the old days in the convent when this hour of the evening, in the dormitory, was the hour when romantic illusions were exchanged in ardent whispers, like fine conspiracies.

She remembered the illusions mixed with faint apprehensions that were still in her mind when she married Ayala, and she remembered the sweet fulfilment of these dreams in the first months of marriage. Yet, she had been happy then; it had been a romantic time.

It surprised her to realize now that she had been happy with Ayala and the realization of this softened her mood like a quieting music. It brought her a sense of unaccustomed gratitude to Ayala who had, after all, given her some memorable hours. It renewed, vaguely, the sense of an old tenderness.

Then she saw a door open and Ayala appeared in the court. It surprised her to see him, alone, walking toward her with a leisurely step. It was surprising because in the past weeks she had scarcely known a moment alone with him, and at the same time it was so familiar that the troubles of his conspiracies and his follies seemed dream-like and this moment was an awakening to normal hours.

He sat down near her.

"Where is Maizo?" she asked.

Ayala laughed.

"Ay, *mijita*," he said, "can't I spend an evening with you?"

She was swiftly hopeful.

"Have you given him up?"

He leaned forward on the bench, and even in the darkness she could see the tenseness of his body as he spoke.

"You don't understand, Elena," he answered. "A woman never understands. This is a high cause of jus-

tice. This is a cause of liberty, liberations—not only for our people, but by our example, for all peoples who are exploited and oppressed. I've often wondered and tried to know what there is in the souls of women that makes them insensible to the call of high ideals. Why should you oppose me, Elena?"

She drew in a long breath, as if to capture time in which to organize her instincts into logical thoughts. She began to speak in a low voice.

"I've been thinking of the time when we were first lovers together," she said. "It was so quiet here, it is so peaceful, perhaps we could be lovers again, Pio. I'm almost happy tonight, it's so peaceful here. Oh, I can't believe in your high cause; it seems like a disease that carries away our men into disaster, and what you tell me sounds like words I've heard all my life, very false and very untrue. I hate Maizo!"

Ayala rose. His voice hardened.

"You don't understand," he said. "You are selfish. You are thinking only of yourself. I don't know what you mean by trying to be lovers again. I didn't know that you had forgotten to love me. If you love me at all, you'll be loyal to me, and help me to succeed."

He began to walk away, then turned and came back to her side.

"You may as well know that we will take action soon," he said. "You might as well be prepared. Delgado Correa has been to Trinidad and within a fortnight he'll go again and return in the night with a boat-load of arms. He's had the cleverness to buy them for us without a whisper of the secret getting about."

"Others have failed because they struck away from the heart of oppression; they tried to win out by bringing their men up from the Orinoco. We'll make our thrust right into the heart! Delgado Correa will land at a place so near La Guayra that, if I thought it wise to tell you, you would be astonished that none of the others have thought of the same plan before."



Maizo will have our men at hand—only a few hundreds are necessary—they'll be armed before daylight and in the morning our half thousand liberators will be here in the capital before the government has slept off its night of brandy and soda. A mortal blow at the heart! The body will die when the heart stops beating. You'll see a provisional government of justice and liberty established within a single day!"

His voice although subdued in volume, had risen in pitch and grown in intensity, and his last words crossed his lips with a passion of utterance that withered Elena's sentimentalities like a flame. She watched him walk away and go into the house and she sat as before, her heart beating faster, and and glow of anger mounting through her body.

What a folly, what a calamity!

The immense peace of the night mocked her with its ephemeral assurance. In a month this would be gone. In a month Ayala would be in prison and she, because she was his wife, would suffer all the rest of her life. She knew what happened to the wives of political prisoners—they were avoided like heretics. No man would dare offend the government by admitting one of these women socially to his house. Ayala, depriving her of romance, was about to take away the power of resignation that came with a quiet security.

She tightened her fists, she contracted her lips, her eyes opened wide in the darkness. Now she hated Pio Ayala, like an old enemy! Her hate was half scorn, the scorn of a superior mind for a brutish force that dominates and hurts. Donkey! Cretin! How preposterous he was! All his weaknesses and infirmities were clear in her mind, crystallizing from her intimate knowledge of his habits, his credulities, his acts. His heroic pose and his melodramatic assertions sickened her as if she were a spectator at an infamously bad drama, chained to her place and forced to attend the struttings of a wretched hero in an atrocious plot.

Then a wish came to her that the business were over, the inevitable fiasco accomplished. Ayala in prison, herself ostracized.

Again, in a swift reaction that left her no time to introspectively trace its origin and cause, she was mad with a determination to prevent his folly. Wild, impossible schemes flooded her mind as if the passion of her wish had overthrown the restrained bounds of reason. She thought of imprisoning him, of murdering his accomplices, of being herself the leader of an opposing force. The mad torrent of her imagination exhausted her and for some moments she sat in a complete enervation, like one who has fought for hours with many enemies and dropped nerveless at the end of the struggle.

In her weakness she felt that she had been immensely irrational. Why did she want to save Pio Ayala? She did not love him. No, she repeated to herself, she did not love him. She could not think of anything else that would rationalize her desire, and yet the desire persisted.

## CHAPTER VII

SHE must save him!

There was a fundamental necessity in this. She found herself bound to Ayala by a mysterious tie that could not be reduced to explicating words—not love, not sentiment, not memories, not hope—yet wonderfully strong, and forcing her to act in his behalf as if the peril to his flesh were peril to her own.

Then, in the clearness of mind that came with her weakened senses, she devised her plan of saving betrayal.

It startled her, it took her breath; it was hazardous and unscrupulous. It came to her out of the seeming sterility of her enervation like an inspiration, like a call. She saw her course suddenly and knew it was her only course. She saw the danger of her position. The brute Maizo would not hesitate to kill her if he learned the secret intention of her mind.

Even Ayala might avenge himself dreadfully.

Now all her senses were keen again, as if a new, sharp life had entered into her body. She stood up and the silence of the tropical night surrounded her, warmly enclosed her, and seemed alone the secret sharer of her enterprise.

She would save Ayala!

She crossed the flag-stones of the court and entered the house. Going into her room she could hear her husband moving about in his study, pacing the floor. She guessed the excitement in his blood during these hours. Even a curious, irrational sympathy came to her; she understood something of his exultation; she pitied him as a mother might pity a child to whom she knew she must deny a childish want. Poor Pio! Pobrecito! Alas, if he were only indeed a hero, how glad she would be to find herself close in his arms, the sharer of his heroic purpose!

Then she began to consider the practical aspects of her plan.

The President would be at Miraflores in the morning. She could go to him then, very quietly, in complete secrecy. Since Pio did not dream to suspect her, the secrecy was easily managed. Again, she pitied the dreamer who paced back and forth in the room beyond, enchanted with the folly of his visions.

Finally she went to bed, but it was a long time before sleep came to her. When it came she slept soundly and was refreshed when she awakened. In the first waking moment her keen sense of life was renewed in the recollection of her purpose.

She did not see Ayala at breakfast. He had gone from the house before she came out of her room and she found herself in no necessity for haste. She was calmer now; she felt a sort of exultant calm.

Presently she gave directions for the car to be made ready and when old Gaspar, who had through necessity graduated from a coachman into a chauffeur (but was contemptuous of

motor-driven conveyances) appeared at the door she was ready.

He helped her to step up into the car and then she said:

"Take me to Miraflores, Gaspar."

"Si, misia."

They drove westward. The hill of El Calvario loomed up green and lovely in the bright enchantment of the morning sunlight, and on its high peak, aloof like a nest, was the little chapel of the Virgin of Lourdes, caressed with the sun like a remote flower.

Abruptly they turned into the short street that is fenced by Miraflores' high brick wall, and turning again they faced the palace itself. Gaspar wriggled painfully from under the wheel, muttering to himself, and then with a smile helped his mistress to descend.

She walked up through the garden alone, climbed the flight of impressive steps, and passed between the armed guards standing statuesque in front of Miraflores' great *corredor*.

Here a gorgeously uniformed *edican* bowed obsequiously and learning her wish, conducted her with a flourishing air to the reception salon, where he placed her in the hands of one of the under-secretaries.

The secretary seemed dubious, as every under-secretary is when one relatively unknown desires an audience with the President. But he disappeared with her card into the adjoining room.

Then Elena, who had forgotten the fellow entirely, was surprised to see young Figueredo emerge with the under-secretary and suddenly she remembered him and his enchanted stares at her *fiestecita*, and remembered his relationship to the president. His father was an old *caudillo*. The young man enjoyed His Excellency's favour and was the *secretario privado*.

"Señora!" he cried. "What a great joy to see you! Will you come with me, señora? As soon as His Excellency is at liberty, I will arrange that you talk with him."

Although previously annoyed by young Figueredo, she was glad to see

him now, for he smoothed the customary difficulties of gaining audience at a moment when she wished, with a passion of wanting, for a swift achievement of her plan. So she smiled at him and followed him into the next room.

Here he bowed her into a luxurious chair and seating himself at a small ornamental desk, fastened his eyes upon her with an unwavering gaze that seemed to drink in her presence like a wine.

He began to speak.

"Oh, señora," he said, "if you could know my joy in finding you here today! I have thought of no one but you since I had the delight of being your guest at the *fiestecita*. And when I think how I nearly missed you then I grow cold with fear. My father had to persuade me to go with him to your *fiestecita*, and I wanted to do something else, something silly, señora, and he told me that since I was now appointed secretary I must go to your home and other homes like yours and take a place in social affairs. What do I care about social affairs? But I met you! What a happy chance!"

Elena frowned. His outburst, half the chatter of a child, half the passionate utterance of a man overwhelmed by a swift illusion, startled her. She had not expected this. She had forgotten about the boy, forgotten the annoyance of his adoring gaze the evening a few weeks before.

"Señor," she said, "what a queer fellow you are! I'm sure you don't realize how indiscreet you are."

The ardour of his expression changed. The dark, wide-opened eyes drooped, his mouth turned at the corners, his young face lengthened ludicrously. He was suddenly an allegory of shame and despair. Elena felt an impulse to laugh. She was no longer angry at the boy.

"I spoke out of my heart," he murmured. Then, hesitating a moment, he continued with a melodramatic tremolo in his voice.

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"The secret of my heart will remain sealed," he said. "Trust me, dear señora, and forgive me."

Elena smiled a little.

"You are a queer fellow," she murmured.

He dropped his eyes and stared lacrymosely at the thick carpet. Elena was still smiling. How young and absurd he was—how enviable! What books had given him this urge to a mad illusion of romance? He scarcely knew her name, and yet, seeing her only once before, he believed that he loved her. Like others of her country's young men, he was magnificently naive. Looking at him she felt like one of a calmer, colder race, and she envied the warm, quick blood that could flower so suddenly into illusion.

## CHAPTER VIII

A BELL rang under young Figueredo's desk, and with a dejected alacrity he arose and left the room. After a moment he came back. Without saying a word he stood at the door and waited for Elena to pass through. He was mute as a fish and sorrowful as a melancholy dog.

Losing all thought of him, who became at once a shadow in her senses, Elena walked through the door and into the Presidential chamber. The *secretario privado* followed her and remaining, stood like a statue during the interview.

His Excellency, the Commander in Chief of the National Forces (*Comandante en Jefe del Ejercito Nacional*) and President of the Republic sat, rather humanly in spite of his resounding titles, at a large table near a window that looked out upon El Calverio and the remote Virgin. He arose and bowed when Elena appeared.

"I am your servant, Señora Ayala," he said.

Murmuring her thanks, Elena looked frankly into his face as if to measure the chance of her success, as if to seek out what might be compassionate in that face. Her heart was beating fast and

she could feel the reflected pulse throbbing above her ears.

The face she saw was not a tender mask, but the mask of a cunning and courageous man. Yet she knew he could be generous, and faith in his generosity was all that sustained her now. She was genuinely afraid. There was a tigerish quality in His Excellency's small, sunken eyes, in his tusk-like, jet moustaches, in the rows of his remarkably white teeth that suggested the half tamed beast, a nature fundamentally feral underlying the surface of polite convention.

"Señor General," said Elena, "I am in very great trouble. I've come to you for help."

His Excellency inclined his head slightly, and smiled blandly, as if no human distress could agitate his ferine serenity.

"I came to talk to you about Delgado Correa, and others that you know; Vicente Maizo and General Salas . . ."

She found it supremely difficult to begin her explanation. The President still smiled, but after she had mentioned the three names his smile grew more artificial, resembling the fixed lips of a badly posed photograph. His deeply sunken eyes rested immovably on her face, and under this unwavering gaze she saw no chance of retraction and withdrawal. She had to go on. She had to betray Ayala. And perhaps, although she betrayed him, she would be unable to save him!

"They have been coming to my house, seeing my husband," she went on, almost in a whisper.

"Yes, señora," murmured His Excellency.

"Oh, Señor General, these men are adventurers, full of schemes, and they talk about these things to my husband. He doesn't believe in their plots and laughs about them to me, and thinks it a joke that they imagine him to be interested. But my husband is so young, so innocent—he doesn't understand. I tell him that a man like Vicente Maizo is dangerous, just like a snake, but he laughs and receives him and talks to

him and imagines there is no danger in it."

The smile on His Excellency's face, half covered by the tusks of his jet moustaches had widened until his lips were fully parted, the rows of white teeth were exposed, and it startled Elena to observe that he resembled an animal showing his angry fangs. With a wave of fear she felt that she had made a disastrous mistake, she suddenly distrusted her own strength, her cleverness, her cunning. In some way she had bungled dreadfully, and the terrifying man in front of her, who perhaps knew everything before she had spoken a word, was already identifying, in spite of her lies, Ayala with the others.

"I know they are scheming something, Maizo and the rest," she went on. "Maizo talks about his 'followers' near La Guayra, and Delgado Correa has been to Trinidad to buy guns—and still my poor husband does not believe these men are in earnest. He looks on it as a play, as if he were in a theater. Oh, Señor General! take these men away before they can do harm to any of us, before they can hurt me or my husband. You can easily discover their plots and stop them before they bring harm!"

Her voice ceased, almost in a sob, and with each moment she felt the immensity of her failure. The President arose and stood near the table. He was no longer smiling. A thick frown cut his forehead into several intense, brutal furrows.

"Señora," he said, "I am indebted to you."

Elena, waiting a moment, stood up.

"You will do something, Señor General? If you would prevent Maizo, Delgado Correa, the others from coming to my house any more!"

"I will investigate," he replied.

"I am so worried for my husband," she said. "You will not misunderstand?"

He smiled.

"Be assured. I am indebted to you."

Elena waited a moment. Then, bowing, she turned to the door. The



President smiled when she looked back before passing into the outer office. After all, he implied a promise—almost made one in words. He admitted his indebtedness. He told her to rest assured. He would not harm Ayala. No; it was impossible; she had made it clear and the President would not discover her lie that Ayala was innocent. She drew in a deep breath. After all, she had succeeded.

Young Figueredo followed her into the office. Swiftly she turned to him for assurance.

"He will do no harm to Señor Ayala?" she asked.

The young man shook his head.

"Señor Ayala is innocent," he said. "Do not be worried, dear señora. . . ."

The tender inflection of his last words irritated her immensely; her nerves were taut; the ordeal had upset her aplomb.

"Little fool!" she exclaimed. "Silly little donkey! Don't look at me so, with your great cow eyes. Don't call me 'dear señora'! I'll come again here and ask His Excellency to spank you!"

In a few angry steps she was out of the room, but she knew, as she left, that he was staring after her with the hurt face of a sheep, and she was sorry that she had been betrayed into her irritated explosion. Little romantic fool! It had not been necessary to hurt him. . . .

Outside the Palace she was helped into her car, and there she sat on the homeward trip in a great lethargy of body and spirit. The experiences of the past hour, the taut emotions of that time, became unreal like something that had happened long ago. It seemed impossible that she had been to the President to plead for Ayala, whom she did not love. Once more Ayala's fate did not concern her; to her he was like a stranger whom we meet and pass by in indifference.

At the same time her spirit reacted to her visit with a sense of full content; she was no longer apprehensive for the future; her fears no longer plagued her mind. Without reasoning how, without the will to reason, she felt that she

had secured herself by this adventure. She felt that she had secured the calmness of her old life, the uneventful days, the even, unemotional hours. She had been troubled. She wanted rest.

## CHAPTER IX

WHEN she reached home she ate a very light lunch and went at once to bed. Her siesta was a prolonged one, and the afternoon was nearly gone when she awakened. She called her maid and inquired if Señor Ayala were in the house. No, the girl told her, Señor Ayala had been absent all day. Frowning a little she began to dress.

She spent a long time at her toilet, as if she were preparing for an elaborate social function. For some reason she was disinclined to leave her room. She had awakened with a vague apprehension in her mind, like a foreboding. It worried her that Ayala was not at home. When would the President begin to investigate? He had given her a promise. Surely he would not break his promise. She repeated his last words. "I am indebted to you," he had said. "Be assured."

Presently, with great relief, she heard Ayala's voice in another part of the house, talking to the *mesonero*. In a moment he came to her door and knocked. She told him to enter. He came in smiling and sat down on the edge of her bed.

His thin cheeks were brightly coloured, his eyes were glowing; Elena was surprised to find him so handsome. He seemed under the influence of a definite excitement and her apprehensions crystallized into quick fears.

"What has happened?" she asked.

"Nothing, mijita."

"Oh, yes, something!"

"Only that all our plans are ready now!"

"All your plans are ready now?"

"Yes—only two or three more days now, mijita!"

"Only two or three more days now?"

She could find nothing to say. Her voice repeated his own words, inter-

rogatively, dully. She felt nervous, afraid. She was afraid that something in her face would betray her adventure, reveal her act. But Ayala saw nothing there, and began to talk, in a vibrant, half-whispered speech, of his expectations, of the perfection of his plans, of the certitude of success.

As he talked a fearful, devastating doubt assailed Elena like a mortal blow from an enemy. Suppose she had misjudged him? Suppose, in these years they had lived together, she had never read the truth of his soul and never gauged the stature of his powers. A certitude of success! Only a few days now!

She had ruined him!

But as she listened to him, the reaction came and his abounding folly was made known to her again. A bitterness entered her mind as she perceived how closely he had brought her to disaster, how narrowly she had averted a miserable event. Under her breath she whispered a small, passionate prayer.

"Santa Maria, Madre de Dios," she prayed, "Don't let His Excellency delay."

Ayala left the room, his wife followed him, they went to the dining room where dinner was ready to be served. During the meal Ayala talked, when the *mesonero* was absent, about his perfected plans, about his certain success. Elena listened without a word. He did not seek her comment. He was like a man whom an idea has made drunken as from a heady distillation.

When dinner was over he did not linger.

"I am going to my study," he said. "Maizo and General Salas will come later. Tonight we will discuss all the little fine points of our arrangements."

She watched him leave and then, arising herself, moved out into the *patio*. She lingered there only a moment. Her mind was restless and confused. She turned back and entered the *sala*. She seated herself in front of the piano and began to play with a curiously childish and immature technique.

After a time the *mesonero* appeared

and said that a young man, Señor Figueredo, was waiting to see her in the *corredor*.

"He says he has a message for you, misia," the man told her.

Elena looked at the *mesonero* in great surprise. Young Figueredo! Could this be a sublime effrontery, or was His Excellency sending a message? At once she concluded that His Excellency was sending a message.

"Show Señor Figueredo in," she said.

The *mesonero* disappeared and a moment later bowed young Figueredo into the room. He crossed the floor quickly, seized one of Elena's hands and kissed it. His face was white, his breath was coming quickly. She stared at him without a word.

"Señora," he said, "I have come to you at once. This is a terrible thing for you!"

Immediately Elena guessed a disaster and a swift strength rose up in her body as if in anticipation of a physical blow. Her cheeks lost a touch of their colour, but her eyes were steady, her voice was calm.

"What is it?" she asked.

"Oh, dear señora, I must save you!" the boy cried. He lifted his eyes melodramatically and rolled them about the room, as if the means of salvation, from whatever impending hurt, existed somewhere betwixt the floor and the ceiling.

Elena kept back her irritation and retained her calmness.

"You must tell me first," she said.

Her words made the boy coherent. He thrust out his excited face, and began to speak in a half-whisper; the words poured over his lips as if in escape from a prison.

"When you left this morning," he said, "the Señor General paced up and down the room for a long time; I could hear him on the other side of the wall. Then he called me and told me to telephone for my father. My father came and I remained in the room in case I should be needed. The Señor General told my father what he had learned from you and my father smiled in the



horrible, icy way he has of smiling and said: 'Señor General, this Ayala is a very rich man. . . . ' Ay, that was a terrible suggestion, and I could have killed my father, señora; that is a terrible thing to say, but I could have killed him then without remorse!

"The President nodded and smiled and pulled on his moustaches until I thought he would pull them off his face. My father smiled again and said: 'Correa, Salas and the rest haven't a peso. Did she say that Delgado Correa had been to Trinidad to buy guns? Then, Señor General, who furnishes the funds for these arms?'

"Well, señora, that made it dreadfully plain and I was sure in a moment that your husband was to be taken with the others. They have been watched all afternoon and it is known that they will meet here tonight. I stood in the room, they didn't notice me, and I still thought that I could kill my father as if he were an old enemy. I thought how he had made the President see the truth and how terrible it would be for you. Then, all of a sudden I was glad! That may be a terrible thing to say, but I felt glad because I knew that Señor Ayala was going to prison and would never come out again, and I knew that you would be free!"

He drew in a long, fervent breath, and his eyes fastened themselves upon Elena's white face in a fixity of ardour that shocked and fascinated her.

"Oh, I felt that all my body was burning bright like melted steel for the love of you! I said to myself that God himself had made a miracle to put you into my aching arms! Ah, *amor*, I knew you did not love Ayala; I knew it, I saw it—but I can give you love more than you dream. I don't care a second for my future, I'll risk anything for you. . . . "

Elena was insensible to his fervour, and was thinking only of her tragic failure. By her own act she had brought the disaster that above all she had planned to avert.

In her misery she did not care what the boy Figueredo said, what words he

used, what endearments he voiced. No courage was left in her heart to rebuke him.

"Tonight they will come here and take Ayala with the rest," he went on. "But you'll be gone, amorcito! With me! Down the coast, not a league from La Guayra, I have my *balandra*. My car is ready and we can drive to La Guayra and reach the coast before midnight. The wind is blowing up hard tonight and we can get to Curaçao and—"

When he began to unfold his mad plan Elena awakened suddenly from her shocked surprise into a tense, acute interest. Her mind noted each swiftly spoken word with an understanding, with a weighing of chances, that was almost machine-like in its precision. With the facility of a woman who faces a great necessity she accepted the fact of young Figueredo's adoration without thought as to its madness, no longer surprised. Immensely unscrupulous, she weighed the extent of her love, and listened to his plan without the loss of a single word.

"But the *balandra*," she interrupted. "There is nothing prepared. We might have a bad wind. We might be at sea for many hours."

"I could prepare everything. An hour after we get there everything will be ready. Love will—"

"We mustn't lose an hour! There is no time!"

Then she arose so swiftly that young Figueredo started back as if from the spring of a cat. The woman faced him, taller than he, immeasurably stronger; she seized his shoulders, brought her face close to his.

"Go now!" she demanded. "Do not wait for me! Drive to La Guayra; I know your place at the sea. Go there now and prepare the *balandra*. I'm not afraid, I'll come alone, I'll follow you in less than an hour in my own car. I can't go this way with my hands empty. But you mustn't wait, there is no time! Do you love me, indeed? Then go!"

The boy hesitated, and seeing the fluttering of his purpose, Elena seized him in her arms, and pressing her lips

upon his, kissed his senses into mad acquiescence. She released him as suddenly as she had embraced him, and pushed him toward the door.

"I know your cottage below La Guayra," she whispered. "In an hour *mi amor!* Go quickly!"

She heard him pass into the *corredor*, and then, with the swiftness of a cat, she ran out into the *patio*, crossed under the palms, and went in through the door of Ayala's study.

### CHAPTER X

He was sitting at his small, carven desk, with a large map opened in front of him, upon which he was tracing a course with the tip of his pencil. Elena closed the door behind her.

He looked up at her, first with a touch of annoyance, then with surprise, for he had never seen her face suffused with this glow, her eyes burning so bright, he cheeks so coloured red.

"What is it?" he asked.

She did not answer, but looked at the man with a sudden wonder in her heart. She had risked so much that day, trusted a hazard and failed, and now proposed a greater hazard.

The man who moved her to these enterprises sat before her, looking at her with surprised eyes, waiting for her to speak. She found him strange. An immense separation seemed between them, like a curtain. She struggled for rationality, struggled to understand, to explain her acts, her anxieties, her daring. The colour died out of her cheeks like an expiring flame, her lips were immobile as if words would never find their forms upon her lips again, and meanwhile she heard Ayala repeating his question.

A noise in the house startled her; a servant had overturned her chair. For a dreadful instant she thought that the soldiers had come; it was too late! Then she understood her error, and again the urge to act possessed her with a force that now, at last, was never to desert her.

"Hermoso Figueredo's boy has been here," she said.

Ayala, nervously scratching his pencil across the map, questioned her with lifted eyebrows.

"He came because he thinks he is in love with me."

"*Que!* In love with you!"

"That doesn't mean anything. He is romantic. But it serves us . . . He came to warn me . . ."

A shadow of apprehension came into the man's face and he slowly arose and faced Elena.

"What is it?"

"That they have discovered!"

"Who?"

"El Señor General! They know that Maizo and Correa are coming here tonight. They are waiting to take you all together."

There was still another question in his eyes, although his lips said nothing. Elena answered it.

"Hermoso Figueredo's boy learned everything from the President," she said.

Ayala was silent. He faced, at last, a great reality, and in the face of this reality the figures of his hopes, and hopeful certainties, dissolved like marsh-lights in the dawn. Into his mind crowded the memories of other intrigues, the thousand repeated failures of other men. Into the devastating instant all his folly blazed like a brand in his understanding, and burned. With a slowly expelled breath he sank into a chair. His shoulders dropped, his eyes became dull, he was helpless.

"Who betrayed us?" he murmured.

"Who betrayed us?"

The woman watched him a moment. Her senses thrilled to the consciousness of her strength, with the knowledge of her superiority. Now, at last, he was stripped of his masculine pretenses, and only her cunning, never acknowledged, could save him.

"But I have a plan," she said, whispering tensely.

He did not seem to hear; he did not answer.

"Young Figueredo believes that he

loves me. He came to save us. He has gone now to La Guayra and down the coast to make his *balandra* ready."

Ayala raised his head and listened with an effort, as if his power of apprehension struggled to assert itself from the confining entanglement of his disaster.

"We will go now, before they come, before they suspect. Young Figueredo will have the *balandra* ready for us. It is a good night and a good wind. We can reach Curaçao by morning."

Ayala did not move.

The woman stepped close to him, seized his shoulders, pulled him to his feet.

"Come!" she commanded.

Guiding him like a child, she hurried him out of the room. Calling Gaspar, she told him to make the car ready for them. Meanwhile she went to her room and from a sculptured silver box she emptied all her jewels. She tied them in a handkerchief and thrust the knotted ball into her bosom. Ayala watched her in a dull silence.

"Take what money you have with you," she said. "Nothing more. We have no time—"

Gaspar appeared; the car was ready. With a great fear, with the first faltering of her courage, Elena led the way to the *corredor*. She peered out into the street. No one was near. She opened the door and they passed out together. Old Gaspar, ignorant of their purpose, stood grinning and muttering in the doorway.

For a moment Elena paused and looked back at him and back at the square, shadowed block of the house that loomed behind him. Tears rushed into her eyes. It was a leave taking with the finality of death. All the memories of her past life were epitomized in this single, backward glance, the old hopes, the old dreams, the lost illusions.

Then she seized Ayala's arm.

"Hurry!" she cried.

They stepped into the car and Elena slipped under the wheel and in an instant pulled away sharply. The engine

roared into the night with a sudden, savage tumult.

Ayala sat beside her, nerveless and silent. She almost forgot his nearness, forgot his significance. She felt herself driven under the urge of a mad fate into an inscrutable adventure. The engine roared as a palpable symbol of their flight and the flight she no longer understood, but accepted without question. But into her senses came the compensating knowledge of her strength, as a thrill, like the thrill of a deep, attained passion.

They left the city and swerved into the dark road that led up into the heights of the Avila. There were no stars in the sky, a wind from the sea blew hard into their faces, and swift clouds moved down across the sky like obscure, gigantic birds flying the course of a fabulous migration.

The ridges of the Avila enclosed them and every light was gone forever from the world, save the two ghostly beams of their headlights, that perished in the thick night like Lilliputian suns in a gargantuan cosmos. Elena's hands, gripping the wheel, grew stiff and numb. Her lips were pressed tight; Ayala was silent.

Presently, like the stars of another universe, the far lights of La Guayra flickered below them in the night, as if they struggled with despairing rays against the immense oppression of the darkness. Little by little they came out bolder, and the dim roofs of the houses appeared along the coast.

Elena slowed the car and peered ahead into the darkness. Another road cut into the declining road from the Avila, and turned sharply, Elena drove the car southward, straight down along the coast.

Now they could hear the sea beating up endlessly against the rocks. Here and there they passed the square shadows of seaside cottages, the summer homes of their friends in the capital. Elena was driving more slowly, and from moment to moment she looked out in an endeavor to locate the cottage

she sought, with which she was only hazily familiar.

Ahead in the road a lantern shone out suddenly, a spot of red and yellow color upon the impenetrable tapestry of the night. Elena stopped the car. The man at her side stiffened in his seat and she could hear his breath quicken. Someone walked toward them, his form materialized, his face, white and almost featureless in the darkness appeared; Elena recognized young Figueredo. With a quick sigh she slipped out from the wheel and stepped down into the road.

### CHAPTER XI

YOUNG Figueredo dropped his lantern and extended his arms toward Elena, but with a swift gesture she pointed toward the car, from which Ayala was now descending. The boy, his amorous pose petrified at the sight of the other man, stood without speaking, like an incongruous figure sculptured in the center of the sandy road. Only a little cry, passing his lips, and losing itself in the night, betrayed his sentience.

Supremely conscious of her own strength, Elena stepped toward him and seized his arm.

"The *balandra*?" she asked.

"*Mi amor, mi amor!*" he whispered.

"What does it mean?"

"The *balandra*?" she questioned again.

"It is ready. But what does it mean? Why is Ayala here? I thought we had luck, because the wind has come up hard and a steamer bound for Trinidad has just slipped out of the roadstead before the storm beats in and stops her sailing. I believe we could catch her in this wind; she'd take us aboard and we'd let the *balandra* drift. Elena, dear name, why is Ayala here?"

She listened to him with close attention and her eyes swept the sea to where the riding light of the steamer glimmered beyond the coast. What a fortune! Yes, in this wind, they might catch her! Elena remembered the tales of vessels sinking in storms when they

beat into the treacherous roadstead of the port, and she blessed the treachery of the place that had made an apprehensive captain put out to sea.

Standing before her, the maddened boy was passionately whispering his trouble, and she heard his voice without distinguishing the words. All her unscrupulous purpose arose and dominated her like an attending genius. Now, in the darkness, she made out the *balandra*, rising and falling like a resting bird against the shadowed slip that jutted out among the rocks.

She turned and seized Ayala's arm.

"Come," she commanded. "Everything is ready."

She pulled him with her toward the slip and for a moment it seemed as if young Figueredo, in the extremity of his astonishment and despair, was powerless to move from the road, but was doomed to watch, like the victim of a new Medusa, the passing of his fabulous dream. But in a moment, as their feet echoed hollowly on the boards of the slip, Elena heard him running after them.

They reached the little *balandra* and she pushed Ayala into it, and turned to unfasten the painter that was knotted over a stake driven upright between the rocks. Young Figueredo caught her arm.

"*Mi amor!*" he screamed.

His cry went out over the waves, into the mysterious night, and joined like the wail of a despairing spirit with the strong, low thunder of the incessant wind. Elena turned and faced him.

In the darkness she saw the blurr of his white, distorted face. A swift, sincere pity mounted into her senses and she seized his outstretched hands.

"You must stay," she whispered. "The plan failed; Ayala learned. You believe me, beloved? I know it will be hard for you, perhaps they will put you in prison for a while. You will not mind?"

She drew closer to him, brought her eyes close to his, and, unscrupulous in the achievement of her end, whispered caressingly into his ears.



"Will you not suffer for the sake of me?" she asked.

She dropped his hands, the rope was untied, she stepped into the *balandra*. Accustomed to these little boats, she dropped the single sail, the boom swung out sharply with a dull blow and the *balandra* leapt out into the sea like a caged bird released to flight. Elena grasped the tiller firmly and set the course toward the light that glimmered in from the slow steamer beyond the roadstead.

In one backward glance she saw young Figueredo's form dim on the slip, and meaningless to her now. She did not think of him again. She was thrilled with success. At her feet Ayala stirred and murmured.

"Perhaps we will save ourselves. But who betrayed us?"

In a moment of weakness, of doubt, of fear, she leaned forward and with her free arm encircled his head. She bent his head toward her breast, and kissed his moist, cold face.

The wind blew hard into the bellied sail, an illimitable sea rose and fell darkly about them, a rush of obscure clouds dashed over the remote dome of the sky down into the oblivion of an indistinguishable horizon; the night lay like a sable fate over all, inscrutable to them as were their hearts to each other.

Ahead was their goal, the riding light of the ship, toward which, in the hard wind, they drew nearer.

(The End)



## Nameless Song

By Elinor Wylie

MY heart is cold and weather-worn,  
A musical and hollow shell:  
The winds have blown it like a horn,  
The waves have rung it like a bell.

The waves have whirled it round and round,  
The winds have worn it thin and fine:  
It is alive with a singing sound:  
Whose Voice is that? It is not mine.



LOVE is a thermometer measuring temperature; marriage, a barometer measuring storms.



# Bacchanale

*By Leonard Lanson Cline*

**S**ITTING in a cluster of slim young trees, my back to a little pool of wild roses, my face to the valley unfolding before me, a brimming lake of moonlight, I held my bottle firmly between my knees, and deplored the passing of Dionysus. And I lamented that all the night was empty of flute music, and that the songs once sung by the votaries in Istar's gardens at Babylon, lighting their way by torches between the flowers, had now no voice to intone them.

These things I lamented, being not remiss in the matter of libations. Until I saw that a yellow star hung, a hierophant of mad forgotten mysteries, over my clump of trees, and dipped his slim fingers into the pool of roses, and anointed my temples. Whereon I arose with my bottle and went out into the moonlight. . . .

That was a brave adventure! I climbed the hills, I danced amidst the trees, I shouted from the lofty places and brandished my bottle over the earth; and I addressed the shadows, saying:

Ho, lovers! Be not afeard, my jolly lovers! My nubbin horns have pricked a star, my little hooves are wet with clean fresh dew and the wine they have crushed from clover. Come,

have a drink with young Silenus, to your own joy, my jolly lovers! I will not tarry!

And I stood by the mournful river, and heard the croon of the blind waters creeping between the reeds and rocks. The sprite of a locust tree put her frail arm about my shoulder, and wound her jade-gray hair about my hands; and I addressed her, saying:

Are there no lovers? I have strung stars upon my nubbin horns, my hooves are bathed in moonlight, my face is washed in roses; and I call to the lovers and they do not answer. . . .

When she had gone my lips were cool and moist as if they had touched moss, and I knew that she had kissed me; and my shoulder was cool and damp as if I had reclined on a couch of marble curtained with white fog, and I remembered that her arm had been about me.

So I went up the path alone, away from the river, and addressed the shadows, saying:

Come forth, my gentle lovers!

But all that night I found no youth or maid to drink with me. Did they hear me coming? . . .

Ah, that the world should fear Silenus!





# Dominoes for Two

By Edwin H. Blanchard

**W**HICH of these tables shall we take? This small one near the door? How desolate—nearly deserted tonight! *François! François!* Do you notice how much older François has grown these last two years? His hands tremble, and he is no longer as neat as he once was. See, he stands there gossiping with the chef's assistant, passing all the petty rumours of the café through that slide in the wall. *François! Pound with your stick on the floor, mon vieux. Espèce de chameau!* . . . Ah, in his woebegone face, and his spiritless shuffle I read all the tragedy of this room. *Two orangeades, François . . . and the dominoes!*

The dominoes! The last word in senility, my friend. We have only to add a slight touch of palsy, and we shall be ready to sit at the right hand of the Lord. We are not old, we two? Perhaps not. But it was so many years ago that we sat here in this same room, with people at every table. There was the whisper of silk, and laughter, and the drone of bass voices, perfume and waving blue columns of cigarette smoke. And the women. You remember them, in their furs, with their eyebrows like those you see in a Japanese print, and their tender, soft mouths, and their eyes, so gay, so sad. Name of God, how sad love had left some of them. So sad that they must laugh always. They were not nice girls, I have heard. Well. . . . *Ah, the orangeade! A la votre!* There was a girl, do you remember, a girl with a face like some exquisite cameo, who sat just there, at that table. You remember her slim, shaped hands, swan-like and transparent. She was thoroughly heartless,

I believe. When she let her eyes rest for one short moment on this so miserable sinner I gave her indulgence for forty days. We are less tolerant now; it was the benevolence of Bacardi that spoke from our lips. *Will you smoke?* But all these images come up dim and evanescent as memories from some old dead existence. How bitter it is to be one of those who survive!

*Yes, yes, you are right. These people who still come, they are the Old Guard. They die, but—you anticipate me. It is for them to pass le mot de Cambronne to M'sieu Volstead.* One thing I miss: those loud-voiced women from the Bronx. You remember that they discovered there was atmosphere in this room. It was picturesque, it was quaint! The pictures on the walls, too fascinating! I have examined these pictures carefully, and I can only say that the artists who painted them knew rosacia when they saw it . . .

Ah, how that brings back Muller. You remember, the medical student? The man whose soul sat so far back behind those thick glasses that he wore? We were drinking silver fizzes that night, I believe, and Muller's soul receded farther and farther from the laughter and gaiety of the room. He began to speak, in a slow, drunken monotone, his little eyes fixed on us. It was of alcohol that he spoke, and of the changes that it wrought in those delicate and mysterious organs that we shelter beneath our ribs. There was something of the impressive in the dull, unceasing menace of his voice; it was Science pronouncing the doom of Dionysius. We listened, and felt our cells breaking down, one by one.

I felt that my soul was far removed from my body; this horrid slaughter of tissue I could watch dispassionately. Muller was talking of cirrhosis of the liver.

"What is it like, this liver?" I demanded. "It is large, and hangs on the right side, and groans damnably over a little gin, but what is it like?"

"Let us say," Muller droned on, speaking with fantastic precision, "let us say, for purposes of comparison, that it is like a sponge. It has—"

"Will you repeat that?" I entreated.

"It is like a sponge," he persisted.

"God be praised!" I shouted. "Who am I to resist the divine will? *Le bon Dieu* has fashioned my liver in the image of a sponge! So be it! *Garçon!* *Garçon!*"

I can see in your eyes that you hasten to tell me that all this never happened, that I am a liar. It is possible. All this happened so long ago. There were so many brave incidents. Ah, it would not be correct to say that we were the greatest generation of drinkers. No, there have been great drinkers since the days of wassail, since the days of those men who fashioned the first tumbler. We are fallen upon degenerate days; this noble and ancient name is given to a water glass! *Nom d'un chien!* No, no, we were not the greatest drinkers of all time, but we were the last great drinkers, *mon vieux copain*.

*Can you bear now to refill your glass? Bien! Français!* You see, he always

stands there, numbing his inconsolable heart with the opiate of scandal. But these heroes of our time. When my blood pressure mounts ten points more, I shall take myself to my study, and I shall write there, page after page with loving care, the story of the noble failures of my generation. There has never been such a book written as I propose to write of the blood of the grape. *Mille pardons! I play this game so stupidly!* But you shall see. My doctor, a charming man, has given me, in his scientific calculations, enough of this precious stuff of eternity to write fifty thousand words. It is enough! I shall put them all in—Farquhar, and Carey, and Don Jaime, all those bruised adventurers, kneeling, clinging to the vine. I shall conjure up the fragrance of a thousand and one nights, the crushed grapes of desire, and the little faint laughter over the years of a girl with a face like Mary Magdalen . . . Ah, it is the one book to be written by a dying man, a book compounded of memories that are crumbling to dust.

Yes, yes, you shall have a copy. It will be of hand-made paper, this book, and there will be wide white margins, and it will have a chaste and beautiful type-face.

But we talk, and—dominoes and orange juice! Ah, you are affected! I have touched your heart with my maudlin memories! My dear old friend, I insist that you take my handkerchief. *François! The check!*



**S**UCCESS in some love affairs is like winning \$1.10 shooting craps. Success in others is like breaking the bank at Monte Carlo.



# The Complete Bounder

By W. C. Wilber

I

WE called him The Colonel, half derisively, half affectionately, because he aped a prodigious Southern accent, though in all his sixty years he had been no farther south than Marietta, Ohio. When he was mildly in his cups he rolled his r's and broadened his a's marvelously and told a story of a "wondahful runnin' hoss, suh—bred an' raised on ouah Kaintucky plantation, suh!" When The Colonel was completely drunk he lost his accent in his cup and lapsed into the nasal twang and harsh profanity of his native middle west. This was greatly amusing to the boys around town and resulted in numerous offers of free drinks.

The Southern accent, which he had sedulously cultivated for years, was in the nature of a quick asset to The Colonel, who fortified the effect with an enormous broad-brimmed black felt hat, perched jauntily upon his white hair, and a goatee and moustache which he tended himself. The scenery, as he called it, usually impressed a stranger to the extent of a drink or a cigar. Sometimes, when the stranger was ripe, The Colonel was able to unload a little stock in the Prairie Rose Oil Wells, Inc., or some similar enterprise, which The Colonel assured "was a wondahful opportunity, suh!"

He had an army record, though he seldom spoke of it. He had been a teamster in a Michigan regiment during the war of '98 and had soldiered with great gusto in a northern army camp. Occasionally he hinted of brave deeds, in proof of which he had an old, big-

calibered revolver strung on the wall over his bed.

"A drink with you, suh? Suttinly, suh! It was my fathah's teaching neveh to refuse to drink with a gentleman, suh!"

Thus ran the tenor of The Colonel's most frequent remark. For the rest, he was a little, fat, florid man, a trifle run down at the heels on close inspection, beaming with good cheer and good nature. His name, which he seldom disclosed, was P. Hugo Statts, the P standing for Peter. But to our city he was The Colonel, haunting the hotel lobbies, button-holing strangers, telling his interminable tale of "the wondahful runnin' hoss, suh," cadging drinks and striving to outstrip the rest of the pack of elderly harpies in the race of wits.

"Keep a stiff uppeh lip, m'boy, a stiff uppeh lip!" was The Colonel's slogan. "Breathe prosperity,—exude it, suh, if you get my drift!"

Even when the little pack of ancient cronies gathered in the lobby of the Mohawk House, with a sharp watch set for the house detective, The Colonel and others of his ilk preserved the pleasant fiction that they were men of large affairs. They talked of big deals, millions, giant combinations, and spoke of Mr. Schwab as "Charley" and Judge Gary as "Elbert."

"Just completin' a wondahful deal, suhs—millions involved. But a secret, suhs, a secret! Not a word, suhs, not a word! Ta-ta!"

Thus would The Colonel wave an easy farewell when the talk bored him, and toddle along—for he was greatly troubled with tender feet—to the Arena café, where he would buy himself a

drink, if he had the price, or cadgily lie in wait for someone who did.

When far gone in his cups, which occurred about midnight on lucky days, The Colonel would admit weepingly that he was the chosen child of Misfortune. Not to the pack, who would have turned upon him and rended him at the show of weakness, but to Ben, the night porter at the Arena, who was a little deaf anyway. The Colonel would tell his woes. With his broad-brimmed slouch hat tilted over his eyes and his pudgy fist closed tightly around the last drink of the night, The Colonel would slide his elbow to and fro over the greasy tabletop and give himself over to bitter lamentation.

"Duhty deuces, suh, duhty deuces!" he would moan. "When they was a big pot on the table, they neveh dealt me anything but a pail of duhty deuces! But wait, Ben, jus' you wait! She's bound to break my way sometime—jus' bound to! And in the meantime, a stiff uppeh lip, Ben, m'boy, a stiff uppeh lip!"

The Colonel then would pull his sagging upper lip into a ludicrously straight line and would go out into the night with his head held high. He was never known to stagger and young newspaper men who sought sport with him oftentimes were helped into cabs by him after the evening's evening had been said.

The Colonel came to our city many years ago, after his wife, whose name was Meta—and a beauty, too, she was, if the picture which The Colonel carried in the back of his watch was any likeness—had died. In his arms he carried little Meta, his grandchild. The child's mother had been unfortunate. She had run away without orange blossoms, we gathered, and had come home to die peacefully and give the little Meta to The Colonel's care.

The two lived on the fourth floor of a bitterly fourth-class apartment house, a ramshackle building where electric lights were unknown and where even the gas supply was scant and often quite gave out. They kept a little white poodle, a curly affectionate little creature named Bessie, who loved Meta and wor-

shipped The Colonel, and they were very happy.

Meta was a colourful slim girl of eighteen. She was wonderfully dark and vivid, and though her eyes were the eyes of a woman in love with life, she was still "the baby" to The Colonel. Meta worked in a candy factory, where she dipped chocolates all day long for fourteen dollars each Saturday night.

It was the only settled income that The Colonel and Meta had. Sometimes The Colonel sold a little stock in The Little Wonder Oil Heater, Inc., which was engaging his attention, and that helped.

Once, upon a halycon day, The Colonel had come bounding up the four long flights regardless of his tender feet, with the news that he had negotiated "a two thousand dollah deal, baby, —ain't it wondahful?"

But the client had stopped payment on the check even while The Colonel was congratulating himself, and The Colonel had a hard time trying to explain to the boss.

Straightway he had repaired to the solace of the Arena café and after a day of liquor and moody silence again had moaned to Ben of "duhty deuces."

"But keep a stiff uppeh lip, Meta, baby. A stiff uppeh lip, that's what counts in this heah battle of life!" The Colonel told little Meta. Then, remarking that his feet were uncommonly painful, he went away just the least bit unsteadily to bed.

The Colonel gave short shrift to the youths who buzzed about Meta's dark beauty like flies around a lump of sugar. He discouraged them with surly grunts when they accompanied Meta home from work. He even forbade the house to the most persistent of the lot, a vulpine-faced foreigner named Sam.

"No movies yet-a-while, Meta, baby." The Colonel would say, when the child pleaded for an evening of pleasure. "Yo're only a baby, yet, my deah!"

Then the two would sit after supper at the little green-shaded gas lamp, which flickered ghostly shadows around the tall room, and The Colonel, settled down in his battered old morris chair,



would chuckle over "Pickwick Papers" while Meta crocheted silently upon the knitted things she loved to wear. That is, unless The Colonel had a "most pressin' business engagement, Meta, baby." In which event he would toddle off downtown and Meta would crochet silently, or would steal down to the street door to whisper to the vulpine-faced Sam.

## II

EVERY morning The Colonel preened himself like a cock pheasant. He massaged his pink jowls, twisting his features ludicrously to take the utmost advantage of his small mirror. With a pair of scissors he trimmed his goatee and moustache, carefully weeding out the stray hairs. He brushed his clothes, whistling a merry air. He blacked his shoes and put on a pair of black spats to conceal the patches in the uppers.

"How is the ensamble, baby?" he demanded.

"Lovely, daddy." The child answered dutifully. If she had said anything else, or varied her answer by a single word, The Colonel would have been amazed.

"Sausage, baby, heh?" The Colonel chuckled richly as he sat down to the tiny breakfast table. He was fond of sausage. As he ate, he glanced frequently and with an air of vast importance at the big old-fashioned watch which lay beside his plate. It was his proudest boast that he had never pawned it.

As the watch sedately ticked off the seconds, The Colonel munched faster and faster. It was the early bird at the offices of The Little Wonder Oil Heater, Inc., who got the softest assignments from the prospect list. Late comers received the "tough egg" lists, prospects who had been gold-bricked before. He sighed softly and prepared to wipe the rich crumbs from his lips and dash away, when there was a knock at the door, and a very peremptory knock it was.

"It's Schagel, father!" whispered Meta.

"Baby! My Robe!" whispered The Colonel.

The robe was a gorgeously flowered affair which The Colonel had bought these many years ago in a sudden fit of prosperity. The Colonel draped it over his ample proportions with the thought that it looked "rich," even though it was badly frayed on the edges.

"Ha—hum!" The Colonel coughed importantly as he swung the door open.

"'Morning, Colonel, and how's The Colonel? Right here on the dot!" said Schagel.

"Ha-hum! So you are Schagel, so you are, and always welcome, too, Schagel. I've often said to Meta, my baby, if eve'ybody was as conside'ate as Mistuh Schagel, what a happy world it would be, heh, Schagel? Fact is, I was just leavin' fo' the office. Impo'tant deals, Schagel, impo'tant deals! Could you,—eh—drop in next week, suh?—it's such a picayune matteh—"

"It's three months, that's what it is," said Mr. Schagel, hardly. "We can't let this rent go on forever. Lookit here, Colonel, yuh gotta do something about this!"

"Precisely, Schagel! Precisely, suh! By the fust of the week, suh—"

"By tomorrah morning, you mean! That's orders from th' boss, Colonel!" Schagel winked significantly and clattered away downstairs.

"Ha-hum!" The Colonel threw off his flowered robe with a tremendous show of energy, grabbed his watch, strung the chain across the corpulency of his middle, donned his overcoat, first conducting a search for holes or stray white threads, placed his black hat at a careful angle, swung his cane and was off.

"By-by, baby!" he called as he toddled down the stairs.

It was a beautiful morning. The Colonel's eyes glistened. He stepped off briskly, for his feet bothered him scarcely at all. Occasionally he passed acquaintances, to whom he bowed with a courtly air. He swung his cane jauntily. The world, thought The Colonel, was his oyster. He hustled into the



office of The Little Wonder Oil Heater, Inc., all rosy from his walk and with an air of vast importance.

"Mawnin' Mistuh Eckstein, suh! Mawnin'!"

Mr. Eckstein grunted. He pierced The Colonel with a beady glance that disapproved and summoned him with the crook of his finger. The Colonel sensed bad news, but stepped up jauntily.

"Statts, you're through!"

"Through, suh?" The Colonel's entire person expressed the utmost amazement. The Colonel couldn't have registered more complete surprise and dignified horror if he had been told on good authority that the end of the world was at hand.

"Through! That's what I said. Outside! You're no good, Statts. Here I give yuh a good sucker list, the cream of the boobs and yuh don't make good. Yuh come back here smellin' like a barrel of booze with a song and dance that these suckers ain't buying stock. What th' hell good are yuh? A dead one, that's what! We don't want old fellers, anyway. We gotta put in a line of young fellers, with some pep in 'em."

"But Mistuh Eckstein, suh! What will I do? My baby, suh—why, you stahve us when you say this."

"She's making good jack in the chocolate factory," said Mr. Eckstein.

"But Mistuh Eckstein, suh—" The Colonel warmed up to his argument. He speciously promised; he grandiloquently boasted.

In the end he won, after a tough battle. He went out of the office still jaunty, with a sucker list in his hand and the promise of one more chance ringing in his head. He stopped in the corridor and lit a rather frayed but still serviceable cigar.

"A stiff uppeh lip, suh, a stiff uppeh lip! A failuah, suh? Nonsense!"

The Colonel squared back his shoulders, gave a twitch to his moustache, twirled his cane with an approving glance at the sunshiny street, and allowed his tender feet to lead them

where they willed. They led him in the direction of the Arena café.

Later, when the sun had gone down and the streets were cheerless, The Colonel, with tired pouches beneath his eyes, wearily sought to intrigue the last sucker on the list with a tale of the marvels of The Little Wonder Oil Heater. The victim, ostentatiously looking at his watch, listened coldly, striving to edge in a word on The Colonel's selling talk. The Colonel chattered like a book agent, with a piteous look for a glimmer of interest in the face of his quarry. It didn't appear.

"The Little Wondah, suh! It is a little wondah—wondahfully inexpensive, wondahfully constructed—the foundation stone of a fo'tune, suh! A positive necessity in every home, suh! I have one in my own apahtment—wouldn't—couldn't—be without it, suh! Ouah company, suh, is launching this in a big way, with the help of big men like youhself, suh! You are on ouah list, suh, as one of the outstanding men of the community—one of the big representative citizens who will aid ouah company to launch this project, suh, and reap the substantial rewahds which are suah to follow an investment of this sound, consuhvative natuah. The common stock, suh, is selling—"

"Outside!" The sucker managed to edge in one word, and The Colonel was left high and dry, gasping and opening and shutting his mouth like a freshly caught fish. The Colonel gave it up.

He teetered on his heels, a tired, fat little old man, striving manfully to drag his upper lip into a straight, firm line. He was saying to himself, "a stiff uppeh lip, Colonel, a stiff uppeh lip!" and his subconscious self was saying, "sore feet, where to?" The sore feet answered by leading him in the direction of the Arena café.

"These confuhences, suh, these confuhences! They weary one!" The Colonel sighed, and leaned heavily against the customers' side of the mahogany. "These big deals involvin' millions—puhhaps—they tiah one all out, suh! Well, if you insist, suh—a little

juice of the corn, Waltah. It was my fathah's teaching, suh, never to refuse to drink with a gentleman. But as I was sayin', suh; Mistuh Pettit, the well-known realtor, suh, is ve'y favourably impressed with The Little Wondah Heateh, suh. I may say he is intrigued with its enohmous possibilities—here's to yuah best regahds, suh!"

Later, considerably later, while the ancient Ben was pottering about at his cleaning tasks, The Colonel inveighed bitterly against fate and spoke again and again of "duhty deuces." At last the servitor began to sweep directly around The Colonel's feet and The Colonel took the hint.

"A stiff uppeh lip, my boy, a stiff uppeh lip!" muttered The Colonel as he teetered on the doorsill of the Arena. Then he pulled down his upper lip into a straight firm line and toddled away home. His feet were hurting him again.

He trudged wearily up the four flights that led to the apartment, to Meta, and to supper. The starch had gone out of his upper lip. It drooped. The Colonel's whole face sagged with the look of a beaten man. There was a gnawing discomfort at his belt-line. He wondered what Meta would have for his supper.

"Heah I am, Baby!" The Colonel sang out. He summoned to his aid the cheery tones that were his by long practice and the careful concealment of heartaches and flung open the door with a great show of gusto.

It was dark inside, and not a little chilly. The little poodle, Bessie, came bustling up whining with joy, and rubbed her tiny body ecstatically against his weary old legs.

"Foolin' me again, huh?" The Colonel struck a match and lit the flickering little gas lamp with its green shade. Then he went into the tiny kitchenette and lit the light there, too. The table was carefully set for him, and the cold pork that he loved was sliced on a plate. But there was an ominous silence, a cold desolation, that struck him to the heart.

S. Set—June—3

"Oh, baby! Heah I am! Stop foolin' yo' daddy, now!"

There was no answer. The Colonel's heart contracted with a sense of foreboding. He hastened back to the living room, favouring his tender feet with little mincing steps.

On the table, near the lamp, he found a note, weighted down with a shiny glass paper weight.

"Dearest Daddy—" he read. *"I have gone to find my happiness with Sam. When we are all settled I will come back for you. Goodby till then, dearest, dearest daddy."*

P. S.—Sam left you a little present."

Pinned to the note was a five dollar bill.

The Colonel unpinned it and stuffed it into his pocket vaguely. It was unbelievable. He could comprehend only dully what it all meant. A vision of the vulpine-faced Sam, leering at his impotence and shame, came to his vision—Sam, shifty-eyed, vulpine-faced Sam—and his baby!

"The young birds leave the home nest," muttered The Colonel.

He crumpled the note into a ball and stuffed it into his coat pocket. Then he sat down heavily in his old morris chair. Sam—his baby—gone! All life was gone, and all hope, too. He thought of the lonely place at the kitchen table, set for one, and shivered at the thought.

"Eh! Eh! The young birds leave the home nest!" The Colonel shook himself, for it was growing chill, and arose.

He went to the window-sill, where Meta grew a few tiny pots of geraniums and with his pocket knife he cut off a little sprig of half-opened buds.

"Red—like her lips," he said. Then he carefully pried open the case of his big gold watch. Next to the three pictures that lay one a-top the other—Meta, her mother, and The Colonel's wife—he placed the budding blossoms.

Then he sat down again in his old morris chair. Little Bessie crept up to his lap and snuggled down against him with a whine of satisfaction. The

Colonel caressed the little dog. There was nothing for him to do but wait. He felt very old and tired.

"A stiff uppeh lip, Statts, my boy, a stiff uppeh lip!" The Colonel muttered. He drew down his upper lip into a straight line. There was no pain nor rancor in his heart. The Colonel reflected, somewhat surprised that it should be so; nothing but a dull numbness; a lack of feeling that was almost death-like.

The Colonel searched through all his pockets and presently found a cigar—not a very good one, but serviceable. He lit up, and a little pile of ashes began to grow on the floor alongside the old morris chair.

"A stiff uppeh lip, Bessie—" The little dog licked his hand sleepily. The cigar butt went out and presently dropped to the floor. The Colonel slept.

He slept ten minutes or two hours. The Colonel never knew. But he awoke to find Meta crouched in a dragged heap beside the old morris chair and sobbing against his coatsleeve. Between sobs she told him a sad, old story.

The Colonel, one hand patting the girl's head as one would pat a stricken animal, listened to her with cold resignation, a kind of fatalism which had become through force of circumstances a habit. It was meant to be, that was all.

"A stiff uppeh lip—that's what wins! A stiff uppeh lip, baby!" he said.

The child arose, rushed into her little bedroom, and flung herself on the bed, too exhausted and frightened even to sob. The Colonel arose stiffly and followed her. He patted her clumsily on the shoulder. Then, quite helpless, he wandered out into the living room.

It was very cold, so he stooped and lit The Little Wonder Oil Heater, which meant only a medium for warmth to him now. The flickering blue light clashed upon and glanced off the chill steel of the old revolver.

"By gad, suh! Not to be enduhed, suh!" muttered The Colonel.

He paced back and forth, four steps

to the door, four steps back to the entrance to his bedroom, working himself into a kind of childish fury at the wrong that had been done. His eye caught the glitter of the light on the steel as he paced and muttered.

Presently, still muttering, he stealthily tip-toed into his room and took down the old revolver from its hook on the wall. Then he went to the escritoire in the corner and fumbled for the ancient cartridges which were in one of the musty drawers. He loaded the huge old gun and stuffed it into his pocket.

"A Southe'n gentleman avenges, suh! He avenges!" he mumbled. The five dollar bill was still in his pocket. The feel of the money gave him courage. He went to the door of Meta's room and peered in at the shadowy form on the bed.

"Goin' out on business 'fo' a little while—be right back," he said.

There was no answer.

### III

It was cold in the street. An icy wind was blowing. It was hard for The Colonel to keep up his courage. He wished he had a drink. The five dollar bill was burning a hole in his pocket. He would willingly have given it for a half pint of liquor.

The Colonel knew where to find Sam. He knew Sam and his kind and he knew our city and its devious byways. He knew that Sam, if he were still in town, would be found at the Avalon, a place the like of which has been known to the bawdy side of the world since the days of François Villon.

It was a long way to the Avalon and The Colonel's courage kept on the ebb and flow. There were times when he had more than half a mind to turn back and seek some wide-open sanctuary where the five dollars would help him forget his woes. At these times The Colonel gripped the handle of his clumsy weapon tighter and muttered courageous phrases to himself.

"Not to be enduhed, suh!" he would chatter.

Then he would hasten along, consciously striving to compel his sore feet to stride like a conqueror's. The result was a mincing and very unsteady gait.

The jazz band was still on duty at the Avalon, though it was past one o'clock and the gloomy side street was empty, except for a sea-going taxi which leaned drunkenly toward the curb. Raucous melody beat its way through smoke and liquor fumes as The Colonel came pompously in. Laughter and drunken titters mingled with the jazz.

The Colonel strode up to the bar, which was screened from the dancing floor in the rear. He threw on all his front, and strove to give the bartender the impression of opulence and eagle-eyed courage.

"Liquor, suh!" he demanded, and flung down on the cherry bar the five dollar bill which had been Sam's sneering alms.

He downed the drink; ordered another and downed that, and before the bartender had the glass from the bar, had swallowed a third. Then, with his feet aching terrifically, he teetered to the entrance to the dance floor.

Sam was there. The thin, twitching, vulpine face was turned full toward The Colonel as he recounted some rare joke to the guffawing party that drank with him. He wore a flamboyant pink-and-white striped shirt, and The Colonel viciously muttered that it soon would be striped with blood, suh!

The liquor took hold. The Colonel flung his head back, smoothed his moustache, and thrust out his upper lip into a straight firm line. The band stopped playing, and in the midst of the lull that followed, The Colonel stepped out into the middle of the dancing space. His face was as gray as his flowing moustache. His hand twitched nervously at the pocket of his coat.

"You, Sam! Suh!" shrilled The Colonel. His voice squeaked with excitement.

A startled vulpine face glared up at him through a maze of many strange faces. The Colonel whisked out the

huge weapon and poised it in the air like a duellist. He clenched his pudgy fist over the butt and slowly leveled it, as he believed duellists did.

"You, Sam! Suh!" squeaked The Colonel again.

The squeak was lost in the rush of many feet. The Colonel's fist contracted on the butt of his weapon. Just before he shut his eyes in expectation of the coming explosion, The Colonel had a vision of Sam—vulpine-face wild with fear, scrambling toward the door on all fours. There were screams and yells. The Colonel clenched his eyes shut, and pulled. There was a click as the hammer fell on the first of the decayed cartridges and then the big-calibered weapon let go with a snarling roar.

The Colonel opened his eyes, and immediately shut them again, full of powder fumes. He waved his hand to drive away the powder fumes and looked again. There was no scene of carnage; there was no Sam, grinning a hideous death-grin on the floor. The hall was empty and there was not even a bloodstain on the smooth maple dance floor.

"Missed him, e'gad!" ejaculated The Colonel. There was relief in his voice.

The shrill of a police whistle sounded from the street. The Colonel, still holding his weapon duellist fashion, minced hurriedly out to the bar. He felt the pain of his feet again.

"Liquor, suh!" he commanded.

The bartender with a fearful eye toward the huge old weapon, obeyed. The Colonel downed the whiskey at a gulp and made for the street as fast as his tender feet would let him. The taxi was still at the curb and the shrill of the police whistle was less than a square away. The Colonel waved his gun at the chauffeur, who had been roused from slumber by the din inside the place.

"Home, suh!" he commanded.

The breeze blew a whiff of acrid black powder smoke across the chauffeur's nostrils. He threw his gears into high and started off with a jerk that



slammed The Colonel back into his seat with a thud. The Colonel recovered himself, and sat at ease, wriggling his feet blissfully in his shoes. He still carried the old weapon like a duellist.

"Missed him, suh! Too bad! Too bad!" he mumbled, though in his heart he thought the miss was nothing less than providential.

\* \* \*

Of course The Colonel got off when eventually he was haled into the city court. He brought little Meta to his defense and the girl, with her face hidden in her hands, tearfully told her story. Then The Colonel told his, with his white eyebrows drawn into a portentous frown and his upper lip vigorously aggressive.

The Colonel still sells stock. At present he is engaged in floating The Ocean to Ocean Airline Transportation Co., Inc., which he vows has within it the making of a dozen fortunes. Occasionally, in the hotel lobbies, he glares

at his old cronies and swears that he is not a man to be trifled with.

"A Southe'n gentleman is not to be lightly held, suh!" he says. "I recall, suh, when I pistoled a man to avenge an insult, suh—an insult to the honoh of my house!"

Little Meta, who has grown very pale and plain in looks, still works in the candy factory. In the evening, when The Colonel is not detained downtown on business, the two sit in the flickering light of the green-shaded gas lamp and Meta crochets silently while The Colonel chuckles over "Pickwick Papers," or intrigues himself with the fortunes of "The Count of Monte Cristo." The Colonel's revolver, which occasionally he regards with a fond eye, hangs from its hook on the wall of his bedroom.

"A stiff uppeh lip, baby, that's what counts!" The Colonel remarks at bedtime, and then he draws his upper lip into a firm straight line and toddles off to bed.



## Legend

*By Bertha Bolling*

THE rain swept o'er my window,  
And dark and close the air,  
A faint call came; I opened,  
And found a wee bird there.

I took him in, and warmed him,  
So gently, on my breast;  
And now, he sleeps there, trusting,  
As in the far-off nest.

Can it be that my lover  
Has fallen in the fight,  
And winged his spirit to me,  
Through the eternal night?



# Répétition Générale

By George Jean Nathan and H. L. Mencken

## § 1

*Definition.*—The truth may be defined briefly as something that all rational men believe. "All" and "rational" are the key-words. "The sun rises in the East, not in the West": this may be offered as a fair specimen of sound truth. If any man in the world doubts it, he is certainly not rational. Of all the millions of propositions believed by mankind, precious few meet this test. For example, the proposition that man has an immortal soul. This is not true beyond question, for rational men question it. Nevertheless, I lately read an argument in favour of the immortality of the soul by a theologian who finally had to admit that all the objective proofs were dubious, and that the only sound evidence was the universal belief of mankind in the fact. Universal? Certainly this theologian was an ignorant fellow, for all his piety.

But let us not be too cocky about even the truths that meet the test. Consider again the one I have cited. It is, after all, a mere playing with words. What it means, reduced to its essence, is simply this: that "The sun rises in the direction called East." Or, going still further, this: that "The sun rises in the place where the sun rises." That is about all that you will find in nine-tenths of the great truths cherished by humanity. Most of them, if one defines truth in any intelligible manner, are not truths at all, but mere opinions. The rest are plays upon words.

## § 2

*A Book on Philosophy and Philosophers.*—After I have finished my next

and, God willing, my last book on the theater, I shall turn my enterprise to a book that I believe should have been written long ago, and by a more competent man than I am. It will be a book on philosophy and philosophers, and its aim will be to dredge up the state and condition of life, mind, health, and heart of the great philosophers of history at the times when they conceived and recorded their contributions to the wisdom of the world. This will, I believe, go a long way toward permitting us to get at the bottom of the philosophies in point, to understand them more clearly, and perhaps more amusedly, in the light of their genesis and their development. In other words, to let us penetrate to the provoking causes, the probable *personal* reasons, the psychological corner-stones. For example, what had Schopenhauer's girl done to him just before he sat down to write his essay "On Women"? For example, in what condition were Nietzsche's liver and kidneys, and how many bills did he owe, when he wrote "Also Sprach Zarathustra"? Again, what was the exact relationship of John Stuart Mill and his wife at the time he wrote "The Subjection of Women"? Still again, how much hair was Max Stirner losing when he first conceived "The Ego and His Own"? Still again, what did Kant drink? And yet again, what did Darwin's mother-in-law look like at the time he first thought of his theory of evolution? The idea invites. Once the war with Japan is over, I shall tackle it.

## § 3

*Criticism Again.*—Upon the value of so-called constructive criticism I can

offer testimony out of my own experience. I cannot recall a case in which any suggestion offered by a "constructive" critic has helped me. All such professors have sought to make me write what was not actually in my mind—that is, to make me write what would have been false. All the benefits I have ever got from criticism have come from the destructive variety. A good slating always does me good. It makes me more careful. It sets me to examining my ideas goldily in the privacy of my chamber, and it impels me to state them with greater painstaking and cunning the next time I come to the business.

## § 4

*The Moral Republic.*—The New York Society for the Suppression of Vice suppresses the best work of Cabell, Dreiser, Moore and Joyce. Meanwhile, on the first pages of the New York newspapers on the day I write are four stories, all related in sensational detail: (1) the story of the rape of a white woman in Perth Amboy, N. J., by a negro; (2) the description of what occurred in a bedroom in East Thirty-fifth Street by a woman witness in the Stokes divorce trial; (3) the account of an alleged *affaire* between a prominent New York society woman and a half-breed Indian; and (4) the seduction of a little girl of twelve by an unfrocked Methodist clergyman in Ohio.

## § 5

*Hamlet Sans Hamlet.*—The classics and most of first-rate modern drama aside, it remains that three-quarters of the rest of the drama of today would be measurably improved were its central rôles omitted. These central rôles, where they have not been manufactured merely to satisfy the vanities of star actors, represent generally the idiotic ratiocinations and philosophies of skillful playwrights who are otherwise ignorant men. And the omission of them, accordingly, would not only enhance the purely dramatic value of the plays, but the intellectual quality no less. Omit

the nonsensical propaganda impersonated by the leading rôles in two out of three of Brioux's plays, and what remains is lively and intelligent theater drama. Delete the sophomoric animadversions that take human form in the star rôles of three out of four of Augustus Thomas' plays, and what remains is workmanlike and interesting theatrical entertainment.

The star rôle in the majority of modern plays is more often than not designed to be a mirror of the mob's thoughts, ideas, ambitions and admirations. To omit it would be to inform these plays with a greater degree of sophistication and culture. Consider, in example, how greatly such plays as those of the average actor-manager's would be improved were the star rôles with their empty heroisms, sentimentalisms and homilies left out. Consider, in further example, how much sounder such a play as "The Witching Hour" would be were the rôle of Justice Prentice with its absurd speeches like "Margaret Price—people will say that she has been in her grave thirty years, but I'll swear her spirit was in this room tonight and directed a decision of the Supreme Court of the United States!", blue-penciled. And this, in the face of the circumstance that the remaining rôle of Jack Brookfield, with its not less idiotic, "I've put people practically asleep in a chair and I've made them tell me what a boy was doing, a mile away, in a jail," is, in the tournament of bosh, actually the star pantaloön rôle.

Speaking more accurately with the above in mind, it is perhaps the so-called "attorney" rôles in the majority of modern plays rather than the star actors' rôles that were best omitted, though the two are often identical. These "attorney" rôles represent more exactly the mob audience's point of view. But, leaving aside a splitting of hairs, the conviction persists that such plays as Macdonald Hastings' "The New Sin" would be as greatly bettered were the rôle of Hilary Cutts—with its philosophy that "people enjoy being miserable, but they never dare admit anything

of the sort"—stricken out as would be such plays as Rachel Crothers' "He and She" were the rôle of the wife, Ann Herford, with its philosophy that "the more a woman knows, the more she has to give to her children and to the home."

§ 6

*Prose Fiction.*—The novel, according to the professors, is a work of the imagination in which fancied beings are presented in the colours of reality. In other words, it deals with life as men and women are actually living it in the world. If this is true, then I must turn from practically all of the American novels of the day with the feeling that I am certainly not an American—that the parish register lies when it says I was born here and baptized here, that I never went to school here, and do not live here now. In these novels, with precious few exceptions, I find little or nothing that corresponds with my own experience of the world. Their people respond to influences that leave me untouched, and have experiences that I know nothing of, and harbour motives that seem to me to be quite incomprehensible. I find it utterly impossible to imagine myself marrying any woman for the reasons stated to have induced the heroes of these novels. Some day, of course, I may marry, but certainly not by the process currently depicted. Nor can I think of myself doing most of the other things that these novel Americans do. The American novelist that I most admire is Theodore Dreiser. His novels interest me vastly, and often move me profoundly. He makes me sympathize with his people, and feel as they feel. But even Dreiser never shows me a man who even remotely resembles the man whose face I shave every morning. I can think of no character in all his books who ever does a single thing that I do—that is, who agrees with me both in motive and in act. One and all, they are strangers to me.

§ 7

*Love and Friendship.*—Love is less great than friendship, and less endur-

ing. Friendship is love purged of the havoc of emotion by the test of time and the trial of faith.

§ 8

*The 100% American.*—No man can be a 100% American unless he subscribes whole-heartedly to the following doctrines:

1. That, since all men are created equal, Harry Von Tilzer and Charles K. Harris were born the peers of Johann Sebastian Bach and Ludwig van Beethoven.

2. That the vote of an elevator operator in the Woolworth Building is as sound as that of the president of Yale University.

3. That an ignorant and impoverished Englishman is a more desirable immigrant than an ignorant and impoverished Italian.

4. That the privilege to vote for a Congressman who will subsequently rob the voter of his liberty constitutes liberty.

§ 9

*Americanization.*—The pother about Americanizing the immigrant, so raucously carried on a short year ago, seems to be already in subsidence. The enterprise was never on a sound basis. What ailed it from the start was the fact that its chief sponsors were such disgusting cads that every proposal to convert honest Italians or Czecho-Slovaks into images of them was inevitably ridiculous. This is one of the chronic diseases of the United States: the appearance of such bounders as patriots and reformers. They take the place of the intellectual aristocracy that we need so badly, but haven't got. They are to the fore in all great public movements. In the case I consider they were of an unusually obvious obnoxiousness. Very few of those that I encountered at the time they were writing letters and passing the hat seemed to have any intelligible notion of the primary principles of Americanism, or any sound knowledge of the history of the country and



its institutions. The majority were simply somewhat puerile Anglomaniacs—Jenkinses thrown into a panic of joy by the notice of a visiting English Archdeacon, or by the chance to kiss the hand of such a proud old English aristocrat as Lord Reading or Sir Auckland Geddes. What they proposed, in brief, was to transform the poor wops, bohicks and kikes into English colonials, which is to say, into imitation Australians, Canadians and Bahamans. That effort failed.

The truth is that the average immigrant, even in these later years, has a good deal more to give America than America can give him. The notion that he needs a long schooling in democratic "ideals" is pure nonsense. The democratic ideals that he brings with him, nine times out of ten, are a great deal sounder and cleaner than those actually on tap in the Republic. Certainly it would be difficult to imagine an immigrant from any civilized or half-civilized country with a grasp of the matter more defective than that of the late A. Mitchell Palmer, or that of the Archangel Woodrow, or that of Lieut. Hard-Boiled Smith, or that of seven of the nine Justices of the Supreme Court of the United States. Even the most barbarous hill-billy from the interior of Albania or Armenia must be in closer agreement with Jefferson and Lincoln than any of these great men. It would be a good idea, indeed, to choose an immigrant by lot from the next cargo that comes in, and send him to Washington as a missionary to all three arms of the government. I offer five to one that his statement of the ideals of democracy would seem so subversive to the 100% Americans down there that they would jail him before he had finished his first speech.

It is also idiotic to argue that the current immigrants, taking one with another, fall short of American standards on the cultural plane. There is scarcely a country in Europe, save it be Spain, in which the percentage of illiteracy is higher than it is in most of the states of our own South. There is not a country, not even Sicily, in which the homi-

cide rate is higher than it is in Tennessee. There is no large city anywhere on earth in which the number of inhabitants who live by swindling of one sort or another is as large as it is in New York. All of the immigrants who come in, when they have the food, cook it better than it is cooked anywhere in America save in half a dozen cities. Nine-tenths of them know more about music than our own peasants know. Practically all of them are more industrious, less corruptible, and more faithful to their wives. What remains is their religion. Well, do you argue that an Italian Catholic or Russian Jew or Anatolian Moslem is improved by converting him into a hard-shell Baptist?

The only sensible thing in the whole Americanization buncombe is the proposal to teach the immigrants the English language. This is sensible, but supererogatory. They will learn it fast enough without help. Worse, they will begin to beat the native at his own enterprises immediately they have learned it—in industry, in business, even in the professions. Everywhere in America where anything approaching fair competition has been set up the newcomers have got the better of the old stock. In some regions, notably in New England, in New York City and in parts of the Middle West, they have almost exterminated the old stock in two generations. A true patriot, in truth, would probably hesitate a long while before teaching Polish Jews or Swedes or even Italians how to speak, read and write English. More likely he would advocate laws making it a felony for them to learn.

§ 10

*"The Necessary Incitement," or the Art of the Movies.*—A letter to the Authors' League of America, published in the *Bulletin*, from Mr. A. K. Weinberg, general manager of the C. L. Chester Productions, Inc.:

We are in the market for one and two reel comedy material. It must be bright, peppy stuff, and full of real comedy elements, and, if possible, contain a plot. Refined com-

edy can be all that we have described above. If it needs stimulation, leave it to us—we are able to supply the gags and necessary incitement.

§ 11

*Fashion Note.*—The way women look at each other's clothes: somehow it reminds me of the way two dogs greet each other when they meet upon the street.

§ 12

*The Uplift.*—Each day, in its evening newspapers, the American public is regaled with the wisdoms of this or that favourite uplifter. I append three samples from successive sermons by one of the most illustrious of these professional hope brokers, Dr. Frank Crane:

1. You have one big battle. It is to conquer Fear. That done, the world is yours, your own will come to you, and the stars in their courses will fight for you.

2. Money, houses, and kings' sceptres are fluff, thin, airy nothings; \$30,000 fur coats and \$1,000,000 incomes are fugacious cloud formations, white dandelion seed puffs, thin humours of fever.

3. Cheer in your manner, face and speech, sells more goods than your arguments and samples, Mr. Salesman!

The last number of the *World Almanac* shows that the increase in insanity in the United States for the year 1919-1920 over the preceding year was twenty-two per cent.

§ 13

*L'Accuse.*—Looking back over his years of work, a critic finds what is perhaps his greatest amusement in recounting and summing up the accusations that have been made against him and the sinister motives that have been ascribed to him. Personally, after almost eighteen years in harness, I find that I have been accused of no less than eight hundred odd different critical malpractices, ranging all the way from denouncing a theatrical producer because he had made a sheep's eye at some mythical sweet

one on whom I was alleged to be mashed, to writing dispraise of the motion picture as an art because some equally mythical scenarios of my manufacture had been rejected by this or that motion picture company. I have, I find in survey, rarely written a criticism, favourable or unfavourable, that a motive of one sort or another has not been attributed to me.

I make no bumptious boast that I am always truthful. In the first place, I am not ass enough to pretend to know absolutely what the truth is. I merely write what I believe is the truth as I see it, and that I am often wrong I haven't the least doubt. In the second place, it is quite possible that I am sometimes unfair, as all men are sometimes unfair. For I have my prejudices, as have all men, and occasionally they render me anæsthetic to things that other men—some of them idiots and some of them civilized fellows—admire. But otherwise, so far as I am able to understand myself, I have no motive save to report the effect of this or that play, or this or that player, or this or that theory of production, upon the admittedly curious but quite honest bundle of aches that goes by the name signed to my writings. And yet—

I have been accused of twice as many crimes against honesty as Wallingford and of three times as many swindles against integrity as the Right Rev. Dr. Ponzi. Consider the more or less general belief that I have in the past deliberately opposed the production principles of Mr. David Belasco because (1) Mr. Belasco turned down a play that I wrote, (2) declined to send me free seats to his theater, (3) assured the late William Winter that I was an ignoramus, and fit only for ash-cart driving, (4) attempted to hold the hand of my mother-in-law, (5) neglected to send me a Christmas card, (6) never quoted my opinions in the newspaper advertisements, and so on. The facts are, of course, that none of these things is even remotely true, save perhaps the third—and in this regard, had our positions been reversed and had Mr. Belasco found the pro-

longed critical fault with me that I had with him, I doubtless, being human, would have imparted to Winter the same news about him. But surely I understand men well enough, and have enough humour left in these old bones, not to hold such a dido against anyone. Or consider the not less common assumption that I am skeptical of the motion picture as a great art because certain of its impresarios have given scenarios of mine a baleful eye. The one and only personal relation that I have ever had with a motion picture company was the sale of a chapter out of a book that I had written and published in 1915. The motion picture company happened on this chapter (containing a plot for a play) of its own accord; it had never had word about it of any kind from me; and it paid for it promptly and, I thought, very liberally. In addition, contrary to the general rumours, it was extremely polite in the transaction. I have thus far never written a scenario and, though God alone can tell what may happen in the future, probably never shall. Yet I believe that the movies are no more an art than the manufacture of merry-go-rounds.

I have been accused of prejudice against Mr. J. Hartley Manners because he once complained to Mr. John Adams Thayer, then owner of the periodical for which I was writing, of a review I had written of one of his plays. This is true; Mr. Manners did complain and, what is more, Mr. Thayer somewhat sternly brought the complaint to my attention. But I never pay attention to complaints, unless they seem to me to be sound; and I paid no more attention to Manners' complaint than to Thayer's stern observations on that complaint. The only thing that prejudices me against Mr. Manners, and playwrights like him, is that his plays seem to me to be in the main very cheap pieces of box-office writing. I have similarly been charged with prejudice against Mr. George Broadhurst on the ground that, some years ago, he printed a pamphlet denouncing me. This not only did not prejudice me against Broadhurst, but

actually made me unduly friendly toward him. I profit by denunciation. To be quite frank, it has made me rich. When my books and the magazines in which I write are denounced, people buy them. As my colleague and I have already pointed out, when our book, "The American Credo," was extravagantly praised by the newspapers, it failed to sell and lost both the publisher and ourselves many cases of imported Gordon Gin. Had it been reviewed unfavourably and viciously, as most of our books are reviewed, it would have gone into a second edition within the first two weeks.

I set down only a few of the prejudices and biases that I am accused of. They will serve as illustrations. There are many, many more. But I am actually prejudiced—and actually have bias—against only three things. These are sham, cheapness and bad work.

#### § 14

*Confederate Note.*—Much of the race trouble in the South is probably produced by unwise efforts to squeeze the coloured brother into a Caucasian mold. Is is constantly forgotten that he is not a white man, that he differs materially from a white man in many of his essential habits and tastes, and that no conceivable pressure will ever change him. What the former poor white trash who now boss the South try to do is to convert him into a botched imitation of themselves. This effort must inevitably fail. He could not become such a ninth-rate white man if he wanted to, and I doubt that he wants to. On the contrary, he has begun to be intensely conscious of his own special modes of thought, his own peculiar capacities and excellences, his own undoubted superiorities to the low-caste white. What he needs is a chance to develop in his own way, to work out his own destiny. But every time he shows a touch of what, for want of a better term, must be called genuine niggerishness, he is instantly treated as if he had shown a touch of wolfishness. The result is con-

stant turmoil. The Confederates pull and belabour him, but he gallantly resists.

A great mistake was made when the Southerners of an earlier generation (many of them were intelligent men, and should have known better) employed theological Munyons to "convert" the blacks to Christianity. Moslemism would have met their needs far better. As it was, they quickly polluted Christianity with the demonology that they had brought from Africa, and this debased faith was gradually borrowed by the low-caste whites of the region. In late years the more intelligent blacks have begun to throw it off, and many of them have progressed directly into a cynical agnosticism. But it continues to flourish among the low-caste whites, now enriched by industrialism. It is, perhaps, the most barbarous religion ever professed by white men in a civilized country. Its creed is a mass of childish superstitions, its practices are based upon a medieval intolerance, and its clergy are unanimously ignorant, and often corrupt.

§ 15

*Literary Observation.*—Again, there is the bad author who defends his manufacture of magazine serials and movie scenarios on the ground that he has a wife, and is in honour bound to support her. I have seen a few such wives. I dispute the obligation. . . . As for the biological by-products of this fidelity, I rate them even lower. Show me 100 head of ordinary children who are worth one "Heart of Darkness," and I'll subside. As for "Lord Jim," I would not swap it for all the children born in Iowa since the Civil War.

§ 16

*Yet Again.*—Perhaps one of the chief

charms of women lies in the fact that they have never become wholly civilized, as many men have. In the midst of all the repressions and inhibitions that hedge them round, they continue to show a gipsy spirit. No genuine woman ever gives a hoot for law if law happens to stand in the way of her private interest. She is essentially an outlaw, a rebel, what H. G. Wells calls a nomad. The boons of civilization are so noisily cried up by sentimentalists that we are all apt to overlook its disadvantages. Intrinsically, it is a mere device for regimenting men. Its perfect symbol is the goose-step. The most civilized man is simply the man who has been most successful in caging and harnessing his honest and natural instincts—that is, the man who has done most cruel violence to his own ego in the interest of the commonweal. The value of this commonweal is always overestimated. What is it at bottom? Simply the greatest good to the greatest number—of petty rogues, ignoramuses and poltroons.

§ 17

*Exultation.*—Apropos of nothing, I loose another respectful whoop for the war profiteers. Where are the romantic optimists who thought that they would be sent to jail and forced to disgorge? Not a single one of them is in jail, and not a single dollar has been squeezed out of them. On the contrary, the Supreme Court of the United States has lately gone to their assistance, and now even the most credulous pollyannas must be convinced that they are safe. Moral: The next time there is a war, go to it at once. Steal all you can, and give thanks to God. It is the safest of all industries under the Republic.





# Bluebeard's Blonde Wife

*By Lilliance Montgomery Mitchell*

ALL of Bluebeard's wives had been, up to this time, the darkest of dark brunettes. He loved their cherry lips, the dark olive tints of the brunette complexions with the deep-stained cheeks of red, the black hair as silky as that of Shenis, his black Persian cat. He loved the temper of the brunettes, as fiery as the colour of their lips. One by one he gave them the key to the forbidden chamber, admonishing each in turn to leave closed the door.

And one by one he mourned them as the door opened to their stealthy turning of the lock and the headsman whom he had secretly stationed within did his duty. Still, he never mourned too long. It was best to console himself with another bride: there was always the hope, hitherto vain, that the next one might prove trustworthy.

Then one day he met Sadi.

Her blue eyes, deeper than his best sapphires, regarded him through a bit of lattice. They smiled, they flirted, they sought amorously the depths of his own. Resolutely he turned away. All of the character analysts were agreed that the blonde type was unfaithful, fickle, the seeker of new fields—in a word—inconstant.

But no sooner was he gone than he wished himself back again, outside of the lattice, gazing deeply into the eyes so different from those of his former

wives. He found her still at the lattice, eagerly scanning the faces of those who passed, smiling ingenuously into the eyes of those who stopped to look at her.

So he married her to take care of her.

The very next day he gave her the key: when he came home she handed it to him with wide, innocent eyes. The headsman in the forbidden chamber said that she had not even come near the door. The next day it was the same, and the next, and the next.

"She coquets at the lattice," Bluebeard told himself and returned at odd times during the day to watch.

But Sadi, the blonde wife, was never even in the garden, never near any lattice.

The evening of the seventeenth day he returned home an hour early with sweets for his faithful wife; he hurried along the corridors. Passing the forbidden chamber he was surprised to hear voices, to see the door ajar. Stepping forward cautiously he looked into the room.

"I love you," the headsman was saying as gently as his ferociousness would permit.

But Sadi, Bluebeard's blonde wife, made no response.

She was lifting her lips to those of the headsman, eyes innocently widened, for a kiss.



# The Common-Sense Romance

By John C. Cavendish

I

HE was waiting for her answer and she found it impossible to say yes or no, or even to temporize and ask him to wait. He held her hand and she was almost unconscious of his hand-clasp. Vaguely she understood that his eyes were fixed eagerly upon her face, searching her features, watching her lips, attempting the divination of her response. She did not look at him.

Instead, she looked across the room at her tall pedestal lamp, and trivial extraneousities concerning the lamp came into her mind and displaced, for a second, the grave problem of the moment. Upstairs, overhead, she heard her mother moving about, preparing for bed. Her mind was glad of any diversion, ready to seize upon anything that might for a little while put off the complex question of her decision.

"Tell me, Alice," she heard him ask, "don't you care for me at all?"

Her senses, like alert sentinels of her illusions, commanded her to say no and accept no compromise with her old hopes, or her present distress. But there was something in her more stable and more shrewd than her romantic sensibilities. Under the urge of this force she took her eyes from the lamp, turned her head a trifle, and looked at him.

She looked at him in surprise, as if she had never seen him before. She ignored the pleading of his eyes and examined his face critically, checking up each feature as if in an unemotional inventory of his qualities.

Even now, although she tried to see him apart, her mind began its accustomed, unbidden comparisons; she com-

pared him with the other man, and found his eyes too blue, his hair too light, his lips too undetermined. She tried to see him as an individual, but he was vague to her, retained the vagueness that had always invested his presence ever since the beginning of their friendship.

It was his essential remoteness to her thoughts that made his proposal of marriage a surprising event. She had been indifferent to him. It was astonishing that he could have been moved emotionally and made to want her for his wife. He had come to her when she had no space in her emotions for anyone but Howard, who was lost to her, and even now her thoughts of Howard, her recollections of his face, his dark eyes and hair, his way of talking, all his qualities that had grown a little fabulous in the months since her last sight of him, were in her mind like a drama of unforgettable events.

Again he was repeating his question. She met his eyes.

"I don't know what to say, Walter," she told him. "Really, I am surprised. I never thought that you cared anything for me. But I don't know you well enough, Walter."

He pressed closer to her; he was very eager.

"But you're willing to know me better, aren't you, Alice? Honestly, you must know me pretty well; we've been good friends, haven't we? Well, make up your mind you'll find out more about me, and then you'll see how much I care for you!"

His words moved her a little; she was a little less indifferent to him. In a measure, his declaration soothed a secret hurt, for at least she was not unwanted

by everyone; he wanted her. Meanwhile, she was silent.

"Tell me?" he asked again.

"Well then," she said, "suppose you give me a chance to know you better. . . ."

For him her answer implied a future affirmative, and he drew closer to her, put his arm about her, and tried to kiss her. She resisted a little, and then allowed him the kiss, and found him pressing her lips emotionally with no emotion in her heart.

It distressed her now to be unresponsive, for she was confident of his sincerity. At the same time she was anxious for him to go, to leave her alone. Presently she managed to tell him that she wanted to be alone so that she could think. He left her obediently, smiling, with his eyes full of hope.

Now that there was no one near her she tried to come to a resolve. But somehow all the little reality of the man who wanted to marry her had gone with his going, and she could not think of him, but only of Howard, whom she had not seen for many months.

She no longer hoped that Howard would come back, but only the repeated knowledge of his absence, day by day, through a term of months, had given the touch of finality to the end of their friendship. There was no final moment to recall. She could not look back upon a certain day and remember him taking leave of her for the last time. The last time she saw him was like all the other times—a few hours with him that were very sweet to her, and his kiss as he brought her to the door of her home, and the expectation in her heart of being with him again in a few days. Then she never heard from him any more. His passing was as complete as a death.

He had not left her unprepared for this event, but toward the end, after she had known him for a year, she forgot about his warnings and when he gave her the pearls she thought that they had grown, at last, very close indeed. She had never felt more secure nor more hopeful than during the final days of their friendship.

## II

IN the beginning, for a month or more, she never indulged a serious thought about him. They met each other by the chance of a common accident and she used to laugh when she thought how well they came to know each other through such a casual chance.

It happened one Saturday morning when she was at the telephone trying to call her friend Louise and several times was given the wrong number. Each time a man's voice answered her and she apologized and told the operator of her mistake, and again the same masculine voice said hello.

Finally he laughed and she heard him say:

"Well, it seems that somebody is bound that we should talk to each other, so I don't see why we shouldn't."

Alice hesitated and then decided that it would be amusing to talk with him a moment; that did not commit her to anything. They talked for a moment and then he said:

"Tell me what you look like, and I'll describe myself. Don't you think it would be more interesting if we had some idea of each other?"

She told him it did not matter what she looked like if her voice was agreeable, and he said that it mattered because he wanted to come and see her. She was expecting that proposal and thought at first she would refuse, but in the end she consented to his coming and told him an evening when he could see her.

"Don't mistake me for my sister Helen," Alice told him. "Helen is light and much taller than I am. I'm a little girl with dark brown hair and very dark eyes; do you like the type? Do you want to come and see me now that you know I'm not a blonde?"

Afterward she told her mother about this conversation, and when Howard came for the first time her sister Helen and her mother were hiding behind the curtains in the dining-room so that they could peep into the parlour and find out what sort of a young fellow Alice had

managed to find by means of a wrong telephone number.

When Alice opened the door that first evening she was a little fearful; for several days she had regretted her impulsiveness. The only thing to reassure her was the memory of his voice, which was quiet and pleasing, but this did not reassure her entirely.

She saw him standing on the doorstep, smiling, and he removed his hat when she appeared and asked if she was Alice. They went indoors and Alice could hear Helen and her mother whispering behind the curtains. Now that she found her visitor agreeable she was annoyed by their whispers and afraid that he might guess their presence and be offended.

He was good to look at, dark like herself. You might have imagined them brother and sister except that his features were carved out with a finer definition, and although he was not very tall he seemed tall when he stood beside her.

They were both uncertain what to talk about, but presently he began to talk a little about music and she discovered that he was a musician. That gave him a romantic touch; he was different from anyone else she had known.

Her ideas about music were vague, but it seemed to her that anyone who was a musician would at least know how to play the piano, so she pointed to the piano and asked him if he would play.

"I'm not a pianist," he said. "But I play the piano a little. You see, I compose music."

"Oh!" Alice cried. "Do you write songs?"

For a second he looked at her with a slight, puzzling smile that made her wonder if he had misunderstood, but after a moment he smiled a little less enigmatically and told her that he had written a few songs. It pleased her to learn this, for she read of the large sums of money earned by song writers, and it was good to make the acquaintance of a man who was not poor.

"Won't you play one of your songs for me? Maybe you can sing it, too?"

He shook his head.

"No, I can't sing it," he said. "But if you like I'll play one for you."

He was about to go to the piano when Helen and her mother, dissatisfied with the poverty of their inspection through the dining-room curtains, appeared in the room and the formalities of introduction were achieved.

Alice's mother, a large, rheumatic woman with friendly eyes and a friendly smile, questioned the young man.

"Do you meet all the young ladies you know in the way you've met Alice?" she asked.

He was apologetic; he made a curious little gesture with his hands that reminded them all of an Italian, although he was plainly American.

"No," he said, "but you mustn't think badly of me for that. It seemed like a sort of fate. My telephone rang five or six times and each time the same girl's voice asked me if I were Louise. . ."

They all laughed; Alice explained that Louise was her best friend. For a few minutes the conversation was general and then Alice was left alone with her new acquaintance.

Once more she asked him to play one of his songs. He stood up and walked over to the piano with a certain reluctance in his step, and when he seated himself he struck several chords and played a double hand cadenza up and down the keyboard before he began the song.

It was a curious song with very little melody, Alice thought. It occurred to her then that he was probably only a novice, for it hardly seemed probable that anyone would pay a large sum of money for a composition so deficient in tune.

But she recognized his pianistic ability; it was remarkable, she thought, how well he played. How quickly his fingers moved! She noticed his fingers now and was surprised at the length of his hand and the slenderness of his fingers, almost like a slim girl's hand.

She understood now that he was different from the men she knew. She explained his difference by his musicianship. All musicians were doubtless a



little singular. She was glad his peculiarities were not striking, for she was unsympathetic to abnormalities. He was different, but only enough to make him interesting, to give his sharply defined features a touch of romantic ardour, and suddenly she found herself happy in the chance that had made him known to her.

He finished the song; she clapped her hands together and smiled. Her smile was more for him than an acknowledgement of her pleasure in the song.

"How do you learn to compose music?" she asked with a naïve wonder. "It must be very hard. But I suppose it's a gift, isn't it?"

He did not answer, but turning on the piano stool he met her eyes and seemed to search her face as if there were some secret in there that an inner necessity compelled him to discover.

She dropped her eyes, she felt her cheeks flushing, and was glad that the pedestal lamp concealed half of her face. She did not understand his searching eyes; she was embarrassed and at loss for words to say.

"I shouldn't have played that song for you," he said at last. "I don't say it is a good song, but it is not what you expected, is it? Don't let us ever talk about music together, for that won't interest us. You really aren't interested in music, are you?"

She was about to protest, and a little touch of anger, like an evanescent flush, warmed her senses, but when she raised her eyes and looked at him the sincerity of his gaze disarmed her. She laughed a little uneasily.

"Well, I'm not a musician," she said.

He nodded somewhat gravely, and then joined her in laughing.

### III

AFTERWARD, when she knew him better, she was glad of his frankness in the beginning. There were no pretenses between them; she was not required to pretend to an interest that was really not in her heart.

Of course, he did not always keep his promise to refrain from any mention of

music. She came to know by her own intuitions, by a harsh, impulsive word from him here and there for some bit of music she admired, how much the thoughts of music, mysterious to her, claimed his hours. Often she pitied him a little; feeling that he would never succeed. She could not forget the tunelessness of the song he had played for her.

In the first months of their acquaintance her sense of his difference from other men made her a little afraid of him, and also, at times, a little doubtful and ashamed of him. Her share was not articulated in definite terms; it took the form of an uncertainty, a fear for the opinion of her friends. For this reason she did not introduce him to Louise until after she had known him for more than a month.

Louise, however, knew something of her new friend and the amusing way they had met was known to her. Finally Alice decided she would exhibit him, and on the evening when he came and they set out together to call on Louise her little uncertainty troubled her again. Louise lived near, they walked to her home, and as he talked to her she looked up at his face as it was revealed to her in the dimness of the half-lighted streets.

When they came to the street corners the glare of arc-lights brought his face out of the vagueness of shadows into the definition of a clear profile. His fine features were almost feminine; she regretted for a moment his want of obvious masculinity.

But his voice was masculine, there was no girlish indecision in the firm line of his lips, and when they walked in the shadows and their arms touched in repeated contact she found a warm comfort in being with him, a sense of fulfillment as if he were a necessary complement of herself. It came to her, as a quiet revelation, how seldom she had felt lonesome since their first meeting, and suddenly she thought that no girl was happy without the friendship of a man; she would miss him if he would go and never return!

Louise was waiting for them and met them at the door.

They went into a diminutive parlour crowded with furniture. An upright piano seemed enormous in the little room; an ornate phonograph was wedged into one of the corners; the walls were decorated with a multitude of pictures, some of them prints, some of them oils by unfamiliar artists. There was a stuffed elk's head suspended over the mantel-piece and the long, twisted antlers seemed to reach half-way across the room.

For a little while they talked together. A conversation developed between Louise and Howard when Louise discovered his acquaintance with San Francisco, where she had lived some years before. Then Louise went to the piano and began to attach a player roll to the automatic mechanism.

A little start of disquietude troubled Alice like a premonition. She sensed that he would not enjoy the music Louise would select and play. Louise began to pump at the pedals, the piano was suddenly alive with noise, a great uproar prevailed in the little room, a tumultuous succession of notes rained into the narrow space like a cloudburst of sound.

The primitive rhythm seized the senses of both the girls, and Louise, pumping alternately with one foot and then the other, began to sway like a pendulum from side to side; her body rocked, her head rolled. For a moment Alice restrained her own urge to rhythmic accompaniment, and then, with a defiance of Howard's opinion, she fell into the gesture of accompaniment, swayed and nodded, nodded and swayed.

The noise ceased; Louise wheeled on the bench and laughed. Alice stiffened and looked at her new friend with apprehensive eyes. He was smiling.

"Let me show you how that should be played!" he cried.

Arising impulsively, he stepped to the piano, disengaged the mechanical attachment, removed the player roll, and struck a chord.

The hard rain of sound was recreated, but it came now from the surprising agility of his fingers, the rhythms were

retarded and accelerated, all the exaggerations that the mechanism failed to achieved were now attained. Alice was astonished and delighted; her cheeks flushed, her feet tapped the time on the carpet, her shoulders told off the measures like a metronome. Again the tumult was concluded and both girls clapped loudly.

"Oh, I didn't know you could play like that!" Alice cried.

He did not answer, but only smiled, and there was something a little puzzling in his smile.

Conversation was resumed. Presently Louise brought in coffee in little cups and several varieties of small cakes. Again the player-piano was exercised, a sentimental song was delivered from the phonograph and there was a lengthy discussion between the two girls upon the merits of different songs, into which Howard did not enter. Presently Alice observed that it was growing late and she withdrew with Louise to put on her wraps and exchange confidences.

They ran upstairs to a small bedroom and here Louise hugged her and said:

"He's a dandy fellow, dear. I think you're lucky, honestly. Tell me, dearie, is he serious?"

"How do you mean, serious, Louise?"

"I mean, do you think he likes you? Has he said anything?"

"I don't know whether he likes me or not. Good heavens, Louise, I haven't known him very many weeks!"

"Oh well, I thought he might have shown something. Don't let him get away from you. Honestly, he's not like everybody!"

She said it in praise, and suddenly all the fears, arising from his difference, left Alice's heart like swiftly rising mists, and a pride in his qualities, the qualities distinguishing him from all the common men she had known, warmed her senses like endearing words.

#### IV

THEY walked back to her home arm in arm. The streets were quieter now; the footfalls of hurrying pedestrians

sounded distinctly long after their figures had diminished to blurred shadows in the long perspective of the street; the street-lights seemed less bright now that they illumined less of the sentiment and more of the motionless bulk of houses in endless rows.

Alice walked silently beside her friend, content that he did not talk to her, finding no necessity of speech.

They reached her home; he paused in front of the house.

"Don't say good-night here," she said. "Come in a moment."

She opened the door and he followed her into the vestibule, on into the narrow hall. A hat-rack loomed up at one side, contracting the passage, peopled with the ghosts of obscure hats and coats. There was no light in the house.

Alice turned and in the dusk of the hall she could see Howard standing close before her. She could not divine the expression of his dim face, whether he was smiling or whether his lips were serious. She found no words to say herself, but tried to speak, hoped that he would speak, for she felt that a word would have her from the curious weakness that seized her senses now, a numbing reality, a strange vagueness of apprehension, that stirred her fears.

Then she recognized her weakness as a wanting, and her former vague pleasure in his masculinity became a keen delight. She wanted him to kiss her, knew she would not deny him her kisses if he would take her then and hold her in his arms.

When he took her in his arms she yielded without a word as she knew she would, and for a moment their two shadows merged into one, swaying a little in the dark hall. He dropped his arms, he drew back a pace.

She was a little frightened now, turned quickly and ran into the parlour. Here she switched on the lights. He followed her through the curtains that covered the door. For a moment she did not look at him.

"I didn't expect that!" he said.

There was a strained note in his voice and when she raised her eyes and looked

at him she found that he was frowning. His frown was as unexpected as snow in midsummer; she anticipated a smile or at least a languishing look. All her sudden, enervating warmth, the charmed intoxication of her senses, was chilled. When she looked up with surprise at the frowning face of the man before her, she found him strange. His old peculiarities, the old uneasy sense of his difference, were renewed.

"What is the matter?" she asked. "I didn't make you kiss me!"

"This is a hard thing to say," he answered, "and I don't want you to be angry with me for saying it, but what I wanted to avoid was having you think that I'm in love with you. I like you very much indeed, but we're so different, we could never afford to become serious. My work's different from most work—maybe you can hardly understand that."

It was an outrageous thing for him to say and behind his words she found an assumption of superiority that angered her. Suddenly she saw him as a very silly fellow, a queer one, and nothing could produce a swifter declination of her opinion of him than the conviction of his queerness. He perceived her anger, endeavored to say a few words that might soften her mood, but finding her unyielding at last, he said good-night and left her.

After she went to bed Alice thought about their sudden separation and small regrets began to influence her like suggestive, whispered words. She felt that she had been too quick with her anger and made too small an effort to understand him. Was not his frankness better than deceit? She recalled the way Louise had praised him and again his difference failed to offend her, but made him interesting. All musicians were different; it would be romantic to be loved by one!

She began to smile a little when she remembered his naïve declaration; he did not want to fall in love with her! There was something childish and touching like a child's remark in that.

She would make him fall in love with her!

## V

So the following day she wrote him a little note, asked his forgiveness and when he came the next evening she was very sweet in her way with him. She listened while he talked seriously about his art; she did not understand and the theme was outside her legitimate interest, but the sound of his voice was pleasing in her ears. He clearly explained how divergent were their sympathies and how any serious relation between them could not last out a year's time.

She smiled inwardly. She was sustained by an inward assurance, as if the facts of her destiny had been occultly made known to her. Then, in the midst of his talk she touched his hand with her own; he ceased speaking abruptly; the light fell over his face and revealed a puzzled frown.

She smiled at him in the languorous way she had seen actresses smile in the cinema pictures and a great romantic delight moved her like an enfolding warmth, and she felt that with her strange musician, her silly boy, she was enacting in real life one of the love-plots of the cinema dramas.

She saw him yielding to her smile and when at last he circled her with his arms and kissed her she experienced the emotion of a sweet condescension and a secret victory.

"But mind you, dear," he said, half laughing, "if I find this is going too far, I'll disappear some day and you'll never hear from me again!"

She was not offended now, but in her sense of romantic superiority she found that she could smile at his words believing fully that in the end she could hold his emotions to her will like dew caught in the cup of a flower.

In the subsequent days a sort of irresponsible gaiety came into their relation; Alice was assured; Howard made love to her as if their exchanged embraces were themselves sufficient.

But toward the close of the year she

began to experience her first doubts. They were not, she perceived, progressing toward the desired finality. How could she bring him to the serious word, the declaration that he wanted her always for his own?

Louise was asking her about her progress; her mother and Helen were teasing her in a half-serious way.

"Alice is becoming an old maid," Helen remarked one evening at the dinner table. "She doesn't know how to make that fellow of hers pop. They sit in the parlour and make big eyes at each other for hours. Gee! I wish I had a chance!"

"These musical fellows have no money," said Louise. "He's not the sort of a fellow that makes money at music. Maybe that's the trouble, dearie."

The accumulation of these taunts worried Alice like the pinch of a tight shoe. She became irritable; sometimes she thought there was no love in her heart for Howard, for he was silly, talked of foolish, impractical things, lacked the solemn qualities of a perfect lover. But when she thought of giving him up her heart swelled with apprehension as if a fearful prospect had been shown to her.

Then came the happening that renewed all her assurance and made the approaching sweet avowal seem the expected event of any hour.

It was a few days before Christmas and Howard called at the customary hour, carrying a little flat parcel in his hand. He placed this on the table in the parlour and later in the evening, whilst they were sitting together on the sofa, he arose and took up the parcel and began to tear off its paper wrapping.

A green jewelry box was uncovered, and opening the lid he gave it into Alice's hands.

It was a string of pearls.

She ran to Howard and clasped him tightly in her arms, she held him close, she kissed him with delight. The jewels were a symbol, each pearl almost a spoken word, the avowal of love, the declaration of his subjugation. Once more the mood of sweet condescension



returned to her and she gave her smiles and kisses like precious gifts.

He said nothing that evening, but when they parted there was an increased fervour in his embrace, a closer clasp of his enfolding arms, as if he sought by the gestures of love to articulate the words his lips still left unsaid. Alice was all delight; she was happy, she was proud.

## VI

SHE half expected him to come back next evening, but he did not appear.

After a week she became apprehensive. An effort to reach him by telephone was unsuccessful.

The following week her mother questioned her: where was Howard? She invented a lie. She did not know what to believe herself.

Once she remembered his words: "I will disappear some day and you will never hear from me again!" But that could not be true; the pearls denied it. Suppose he were sick? It tortured her to imagine him desperately ill, without knowledge of his whereabouts or how to reach him.

A month passed and then she confessed her disaster to Louise.

She found herself talking coldly, admitting the fact for the first time in definite words. As she talked her voice began to sound strangely in her ears as if another individual were talking through her lips.

"He's gone," she said. "He got tired of me. I was silly to care for him so much; I should have known better. I know he won't come back, but I know too that I can forget about him, I can forget that he ever lived. . ."

She wanted to go on, but her tongue seemed to thicken in her mouth, the words would not form on her lips, and looking suddenly about the small room she found that tears were distorting the familiar images until the straight lines of her bed became twisted into unaccustomed figures, the bureau was a vibrant bulk of waving lines, the pictures on the wall were blotted out.

"I . . . I'll never, never forget him!" she cried. "I'll never forget him, never!"

Her sobs seemed to tear her like cruel hands. She felt Louise comforting her with caressing touches, but nothing could quiet the convulsive passion of her weeping. Then the hysteria passed and she was calm again.

"Don't worry, dearie," Louise said. "After all, those musical fellows are not the sort a girl wants. I'm going to introduce you to a dandy fellow. You'll forget all about Howard."

But Alice knew she could not forget. No one could replace him; he was different. Walter, to whom Louise introduced her, was like all the other young men she had known. He talked of ordinary things, made the ordinary jokes, never spoke to her of ideals and aspirations that she could not understand. With Walter she could never find the ineffable wonder of mysterious romance, and enact the reality of romantic stories. He came to her like a shadow, and when she talked to him she thought of Howard. He was the foil of her memory, the contrast to keep alive her grief.

The evening that he left her after the surprise of his proposal she went to her room, and for a time, sitting in front of her mirror, she tried to dominate her mind with a resolution to accept him. She tried to force the mood of final resignation into her heart, but as she strove with her emotions they overwhelmed her like the sudden breaking through of waters from an ineffectual dam.

An incoherent sense of loss dominated her, wrecked her; she sobbed endlessly, her tears fell upon her hands and ran between the crevices of her tense fingers. Then, utterly weary, she went to bed.

## VII

IN the morning she awoke with a headache and during the day her mind was dull, as if a lethargic fever had deprived her of sense and feeling. Walter came in the evening to take her out to dinner. She saw him look at her face

hopefully, and observed his disappointment when she met his eyes without a trace of responding promise.

They went downtown and when they alighted from the street-car they walked through the crowded streets. Walter had become silent when he found his questions unanswered; once or twice he asked her what was the matter and she did not reply.

They were about to cross the street to enter a restaurant when Alice saw Howard.

He was coming toward her and a girl was leaning on his arm. He was smiling down into the face of the girl, talking to her with his well-remembered animation, moving his hands with old, familiar gestures. Alice stopped: Walter turned and looked at her in surprise.

"What's the matter?" he asked, stupidly.

She did not answer. Her eyes were fastened on Howard and the girl; they came close and passed, and Howard, in his customary absorption, had no glance for anything save the girl at his side.

Suddenly, on top of an instant, acute pain, a unique ironic joy possessed Alice and she almost laughed aloud with an hysterical scream.

The girl was like herself, another little girl; he was talking to her and the girl did not understand but was happy at hearing the sound of his voice and thinking of his difference. A strange joy filled Alice to find the girl one of her own sort, for in the end she would suffer as Alice had suffered. "He's telling her that some day he will disappear without a word. It's true! He will! But she doesn't believe it!"

Walter was pulling at her arm and quickly she turned her face to his.

"I felt very funny for a minute," she said. "I felt faint—"

At once, in his stupidity, he was im-

mensely solicitous; he questioned her, he helped her tenderly, he asked her if she were better now. And then she found his common way and his understandable heart assuaging and appeasing, and a sense of her superiority came to her and soothed her mind like a caress. How well she understood Walter; it seemed that she had known him all her life!

He was not different, but like other men. She could dominate him, make him work hard for her, make him earn the means for everything she wanted. A swift contempt for eccentricity filled her practical mind like a sudden return of sanity after a short hour of blind madness. She might even learn to love Walter in the common-sense way you love a man when he is good to you and gives you the things you need.

"Walter," she said, "there's something I'm going to tell you tonight. . ."

"What is it?" he asked unsuspectingly.

"Will it make you happy?"

He stared at her a moment and then, with widened eyes, he said:

"Have you decided to say 'yes'?"

"Yes," she answered.

He pressed her arm close in his fingers, and drew as near to her as he dared in the public place of the street, and feeling the pressure of his eager fingers she felt weak for a moment as if a ghost had left her body, the spirit of romantic dreams, and an unaccustomed emptiness remained behind.

"Oh, believe me," she heard him whispering. "I will be good to you, I will be good to you, dear."

Yes, he would be good to her. She was safe; she laughed a little; he wondered at her laughing; she had won her man.

She passed into the brightly lighted restaurant with her betrothed.



# The Poet as Lover

*By Tom Ransford*

HE said to her: "Your hair is a wave of bronze, threaded with gold and gleaming with topaz. Your skin is as ivory, chaste and cool, but your lips burn like fevered roses. Your eyes are dark green pools, shadowy, brooding, and mysterious. And your hands, like languid serpents, know how to caress—and how to kill!"

She said to him: "Alas! You are not thinking of me at all. Only of your skill in weaving words."



## Price

*By A. Newberry Choyce*

OH! I shall be a dreamer and dream of old delight,  
Of tourneyings and travelings to lands of faërie;  
How should I bear the bondage of a little moonlit night  
With curlews crying landward forlornly from the sea!

So rope you up your red-gold hair to bind your temples round  
That shall no more go streaming and sweet across my lips;  
For night shall creep upon you like a little quiet hound  
And yellow moons to lash you with their little silver whips.



A GREAT philosopher is one who says the things you have always thought in language that you cannot understand.



# A Morning Walk

*By Clarkson Crane*

I

ONE morning last summer Mason Bradley arrived in Chicago on his way east from San Francisco, and, because his train did not leave for several hours, decided to walk around the neighborhood on the north side where he had lived as a boy. He had left Chicago twenty years before, when he was just nineteen, and since then had crossed the city only once or twice from one railway station to another. The dark buildings had always repelled him; Michigan Avenue, which he called the "beveled edge of the place," had seemed affected, pretentious; he had been glad that he lived in Chicago no more.

But now, in the early morning, with the sombre streets around the North-Western station like long tunnels carved from ebony, and the smoky hush over the river, he felt that the city was not so bad after all; and he remembered the time when Chicago had been almost a world to him, when he had accepted without question all its flatness and dreariness and the sad repetition of its banality. And it had not seemed banal.

In the La Salle Hotel he ate breakfast, and then walked slowly along Madison Street to State. It was nine o'clock; the air was hot; policemen at the corners whistled regularly; the crowds, already weary, moved and halted, moved and then halted, moved again; and no one laughed. The flags on the department stores were limp.

Through the window of a North State Street car he looked at the horses and wagons on South Water,

and at the bananas and tomatoes crushed in the gutter; then he saw the dingy grain elevator standing above the river. Often on Saturday mornings he had come downtown alone. The air had that same stuffiness; under the bridge sticks moved in dirty water; there had been smoke and warm, yellowish sunlight, and voices shouting and droning. But the bridge used to be different; when he was a boy, it had turned instead of rising in two parts. That teamster with yellow bristles on his face and tobacco juice in the corner of his mouth seemed unaware that the bridge long ago had turned instead of rising.

A fat woman in a crisp white dress that rustled pressed into the seat beside him. Her face was red; lines of wet hair were smeared on her temples; she smelled of perspiration. Mason Bradley remembered an Irish cook named Mary who, during one summer, used to take himself and his brother Dicky, one year younger, to a narrow beach in Edgewater. She would sit in the sand under an umbrella while the two boys waded. He could feel the shallow, frothy layer of water now covering his feet, and see Dicky again, chubby and blond standing with his arms apart, staring down with big eyes. Now Dicky, married and living in New Jersey, was fat and bald, and wore several rings.

Mason smiled, remembering. The woman near him was hot, and he moved as close to the window as possible, and tried to make out the street names. Each one that entered his mind—Ontario, Erie, Superior, Chicago Avenue—unfolded into trail-



ing images; himself walking black-mittened on snowy pavements; dark, warm houses where he felt unhappy; a little candy-store man with pimples who leaned over his counter.

Around that corner, on Rush Street, was the house where his sister Helen, three years older than he, used to go for piano lessons: once he had snatched her music roll and thrown it over a fence of iron palings; and because she only looked sad, without crying or stamping her foot, he had squeezed through the gate and picked up the roll for her. That was when she was fifteen and he twelve. She wore a red, fuzzy tam-o'-shanter.

At Bellevue Place, the fat woman got up and left the car. Mason watched her cross the street, and again she reminded him of Mary. One winter afternoon, downstairs in the basement kitchen, under the yellow gas flame, he hit Mary in the eye with a rubber ball. She wept, and he wept too, standing on the cement floor near the furnace; and for a month he did not touch the ball. A month later Mary left the Bradleys, and for weeks Mason felt that he had driven her forth. But a series of yellow-haired Swedes, who talked in loud voices and drank coffee from thick white cups, made him forget.

He descended from the car at Division Street and walked toward the lake. There, as usual, was the drug-store on the corner, which he had never liked because it had no soda fountain; and there, beyond the alley, was the Porter School, standing with its front of red brick and its large windows. For years he had climbed those grey steps, and emerged every afternoon, silent in the shouting; and he could visualize now, as he paused under the quiet, mature leafage of one of the elms, the rubber matting on the stairs, the staring clock on the landing, the high-school room, full of desks, at the end of the hall.

He thought for a moment that he might go in; but he remembered that it was summer, that school was closed,

and that the empty building would be silent, with yellow shades pulled down, and a smell of varnish in the air from desks that had been done over. A janitor whom he did not know would look at him; the big clock would be ticking on by itself.

Though a year younger, his brother had been in the same class at school. Dicky played all the games, and was usually elected captain each year of one or two teams. He had played half-back, and first base, and could skate furiously. Walking now along Division Street (the asphalt was dry and warm) Mason felt again just as keenly as years before that mixture of shame and rage that made him tremble, when Dicky, flushed and soiled, would toss a ball toward him, knowing that he couldn't catch, and shout loudly:

"Come on, Mason, put it here!"

Everyone would laugh; he would pick up the ball, and throw it back,—like a girl, they all said; and often as he went away the tears would blur his glasses, and he would feel like killing someone, and would imagine himself holding a revolver, and shooting and shooting with his back to a wall. Then Dicky would pass by, on his way to the vacant lot where the games were played, and would glance back over his shoulder at Mason.

Five years ago, when he had visited Dicky at Haworth, New Jersey, he had noticed once or twice that same expression on his face. Once, while he was pouring out cocktails, Dicky had said:

"You could do so much better, Mason. Two hundred a month! Why, I was making that after I'd been out of college a year."

He had not answered, because the two boys, dressed sleekly for dinner, thumped down the stairs, slid across the floor, reached for their father. Mrs. Bradley, round and blonde like her husband, shook her head; Dicky, putting down the shaker and wiping his hands exclaimed:

"Did you beat 'em this afternoon?"

Eight to one? Say, wasn't that fine! And you pitched the whole game, Bobby? Good enough!"

At the end of the street Mason could see the lake, a gray wall with the dark line of the distant break-water drawn across it. He turned north on Astor. Nothing here had changed. Yes, an apartment building stood on Scott Street where once, behind weeping willows and a rough fence, there had been stables, and a low area of black mud, pockmarked by the hoofs of heavy working horses.

In the brownstone house half a block away had lived Emily, Helen's best friend. She too had married a Detroit man, a doctor named Wade, and the two women still saw one another. Some years ago the Wades and the Curles had gone abroad together. After a few weeks the Wades returned, and soon Temple Curle felt that he too could be away no longer from his business. He hurried to Detroit, leaving Helen and Jack in Nice; and because Jack was a delicate boy, Helen decided not to send him back to school for a year.

Mason pondered. Helen was a Christian Scientist now, and Jack had gone to Andover. Temple Curle was more silent than ever. Last year, Helen had spent the winter in Santa Barbara, living in a white villa steeped in sunlight; and Jack had left school and come out to recover from influenza. There was a plaintive note in Helen's voice, and bluish shadows under her eyes. In the spring, she had investigated the Theosophical School at Krotona; and a few weeks later, sitting in a San Francisco restaurant, had told Mason all about it, puffing at cigarettes and bending them half smoked into a plate. Across the table, Jack, looking rather pale, drew lines on the cloth with the handle of a spoon, and lifted now and then his large, dark eyes to his mother's face.

## II

MASON walked along Astor Street,

crossed an alley, and saw the Little Park. Curious! He had almost forgotten that it was there. The triangular sidewalk, around which he used to pedal his velocipede, still enclosed meagre elms and a few green benches. On one of them a nurse maid sat knitting; at her feet a little boy pushed backward and forward a tiny red cart; and another boy, not far away, rolled on the grass.

Mason paused. Flies were humming. A grocery wagon rattled by. Occasionally, robins pecked the ground. Behind the concrete wall that bordered the alley a pedler's voice repeated:

"Rags—old iron! Rags—old iron!"

When he was a child, Mason had thought the man said: "Rags o' lion, rags o' lion!" and, for some reason, splendid and chivalrous images always swept into his mind, like red and gold emblems on a shield.

The pedler's bony horse drew the old wagon from the alley, turned south on Astor, and the man's voice diminished.

Mason followed the sidewalk that crossed the park diagonally. On one of the trees, fastened by a rusty chain, hung a green basket into which a man with a pointed rod threw old papers and bits of refuse. Into this basket the boys used to climb, calling it a fort or the car of a balloon or a ship. Once Dicky had fallen out and struck his nose on the ground: Mason remembered the thick stream of blood running down over his brother's mouth, the soaked handkerchief, the other boys standing around in silent surprise. He could almost feel again his sudden nausea.

A group of boys crossed Goethe Street and came toward him over the grass. They wore light shirts open at the necks, with sleeves rolled up. When they reached the sidewalk, they stood together talking. Mason remembered a game called "red-light" that he used to play when he was their age. It involved much running and hiding. He thought now that these

boys were doing exactly what he used to do; that they were standing on the same ground, wearing the same sort of clothes, making the same gestures, saying what he and his friends used to say. No doubt they went to the same school.

He walked toward them and stood not far away, hands in pockets; but he hesitated several minutes before asking:

"Do you boys go to the Porter School?"

Two of them answered: "Yes." He said: "I used to go there." There was silence. Finally, a freckled faced boy who wore spectacles asked: "What did he say?" and another whispered: "He says he used to go to the Porter School." They stared at him.

An ice wagon went by along Goethe Street, rumbling and dripping. They all turned. The freckled boy ran after it, clambered onto the step behind, and hung there for a minute, reaching in, while the others shouted. Then he jumped off, his shoes clapping the asphalt, and returned holding in both hands a chunk of ice. The boys pawed him.

"Oh gimme some!"

"Remember me!"

"I'm your friend."

He let the ice fall on the sidewalk: the boys clutched at the splintered pieces. Then each one pulled out a handkerchief, knotted it around his ice and began to suck.

Mason thought: "I used to do that." He said nervously: "Well, goodbye," and walked up Goethe, the street on which he used to live, toward State. He went slowly, crossing to the north side. So many memories moved around him on the gray pavement under the elms!

Facing him from across the street, the outside of the old house had not changed. It was built of green stone with brown steps in front, and was between two other houses, also of green stone, that shared its walls. The black iron rail that descended the steps was reddish here and there with rust;

a few blades of grass stood in the black ground to the left of the basement door; the first-floor window was open. On the upper half, behind the glass, was a strip of cardboard with *Furnished Rooms* written on it in pencil.

Mason noticed that the number had been altered. He wanted suddenly to cross the street, ring the bell, and say to the person opening the door:

"I used to live in this house. I lived here eighteen years. The number, you know, used to be two hundred." He could almost feel himself walking forward, climbing the steps, pushing the bell. But he remained where he was, resting one hand on the wire netting that surrounded a tree-trunk.

Behind him was the same stable, built of brownstone to match the house whose carriages it used to shelter. For a long time now it had been vacant, and a For Sale sign, rather sooty, was near the window. Every election day, before going downtown, his father would cross the street to vote: Mason remembered over the doorway the white canvas with black letters that announced "Polling Place."

And opposite, next to his own old house, was where Burton had lived, the little boy from Mexico City who spent three years with his aunt in Chicago. He went, Mason remembered, to another school, and used to come home at twelve o'clock instead of at one. And on Sundays Mason would have him in, and they played together with large blocks, building walls and towers and platforms. The acrid, dusty odour of the carpet came again.

He looked up at the third-floor window, behind which he had lived for eighteen years. Long ago a thermometer had been there, with one corner chipped off, that kept pace with Chicago weather. Mason wanted again to go over and ring the bell, but he felt that he would be very embarrassed and would stammer and

blush. Then he noticed the placard again that said:

*Furnished Rooms.*

He wondered which room was vacant now; probably it was the small one on the third floor that dominated two ranks of backyards and had housed a long succession of Swedish maids. He recalled the odour peculiar to the servants' bedroom. Usually the door was closed, but now and then he had peeped in. Or it might even be his own room there in front.

He left the tree near which he had been standing, and crossed the street. As he climbed the steps, his heart pounded, and his hand trembled so that he had to wait for a moment before ringing the bell. He heard it sounding far away, deep down in the house, just as he used to hear it years ago, before he had received a latch-key; and he felt as if he would have to hurry upstairs and dress for dinner. He waited.

Here in the vestibule, behind the outside door, he used to keep his sled. The points of the runners would grind on the tile floor, and snow would melt into little white puddles. The door opened: a tall maid with blue sleeves rolled up and yellow hair stood holding a feather duster in her hand.

"Yaa—as?"

"I see—ah—you have a room—for rent."

She turned and clumped away, her shoes squeaking. He heard her call: "Mrs. Pollock! Mrs. Pollock! . . . Ma'am."

He stepped back and leaned over the rail. Down those stairs he used to carry his bicycle, down those stairs and through the narrow doorway. The front wheel always turned, the handle bars would strike the wall and sometimes poke him in the face; one of the pedals dug into his side.

"Were you looking for a room?"

A little gray-haired woman in black was peering at him, one hand on the door knob. Her eyes behind glasses

were dimly blue; her cheeks were sunken.

"I—I—yes,—I—"

On Saturdays, he and Dicky would turn their bicycles upside down on the grass-plot, and wipe the crusted, white mud from the frames. Then, holding the pedals like cranks, they would spin the rear wheels and squirt oil onto the ticking chains.

"The basement steps aren't very clean," Mrs. Pollock said: "Of course they haven't been swept this morning."

"No, I—I—." He followed her into the house.

The hallway and middle room were sombre as usual, and he could see one of the windows in the dining room, and through it the wooden fence around the backyard. A big table stood where no table had stood before; the davenport was gone; there was a different smell in the air.

"It's the big front room on the third floor. Would you want a big room?"

"If I could see it, I—"

Gathering up her skirts, bending forward, and breathing strongly through her nose, Mrs. Pollock began to climb the stairs. There was a hole in her left stocking. Mason followed slowly.

### III

THE banister along which Mason drew his hand felt just as smooth and cool as ever; but the carpet was red instead of green; and down the wall ran no sloping line of pictures. Mrs. Pollock halted on the landing and stood gasping. Finally she said:

"Asthma. Sometimes I can't sleep at night, it's that bad."

Mason did not want this wheezing woman to go up three flights of stairs, but he did not know what to do. He stammered:

"It's too bad to make you climb away up. Couldn't—ah—the—maid—?"

"Oh no, oh no, I was just going anyway, just going anyway." She proceeded.

As he walked along the hall on the second floor, passing the door of Helen's



room, he could see into the front room where his mother and father had slept. The shades were drawn to keep out the heat, and he could make out only a chair or two, greyish-white bedclothes, the glint of a brass knob.

It was like so many other mornings in summer when he was coming home to lunch. He would come in from school or, if school were ended, from play, would go to his room on the third floor, take off his coat, and, feeling all hot and dirty, go to the washstand in the hall and turn on both faucets. While he stood there, leaning forward, Dicky would climb the stairs, making shrill noises, lifting his feet wearily and call out:

"Hurry up, Mason, luncheon's ready."

Then the two boys, side by side before the broad mirror, would brush their wet hair, draw into place their ties, and tuck their moist shirts more smoothly into their trousers. And soon Mrs. Bradley's voice would rise from the floor below:

"Come, boys, lunch is ready."

For years he and Dicky had slept in the front room, occupying narrow beds that were separated from each other by six inches of red carpet. He had worn pajamas and Dicky, nightshirts; he had abandoned Eton collars a year before his brother; he was sick in bed at least two months every year, while Dicky was always well; he rarely brought other fellows into the house, Dicky always had companions.

Much later, when he had left Chicago and gone to Southern California for his weak lungs, from Yale Dicky would write to him, and all the letters said: "A bunch of us went," "another fellow and I," "some of us have." At that time, Mason only knew another clerk in the insurance office; he used to walk home with him every afternoon; sometimes they went to Los Angeles for the weekend; and that was all.

Mrs. Pollock halted on the third floor and panted again. Mason noticed that the house had been wired since his time, and that an electric bulb hung over the well of the staircase where a solitary

gas jet had been. The washstand in the hall was just the same; he wanted to open the little door underneath and look in; but Mrs. Pollock said, standing under the skylight:

"This is where you'd wash. It's nice and clean." She gasped. "Hot water. The water closet's right here. And the bathtub's on the floor below."

She blinked at him in the white light that came from above, and drew her fingers over her cheek. She wore a gold ring; her nails were cut straight across.

"And this is the room. It's a big room." She walked forward.

Mason almost said:

"I used to sleep in there."

But he hesitated, and then wondered whether he should tell the woman that he had once lived in the house. He might as well mention the fact. He opened his mouth. But Mrs. Pollock went to one of the windows and tugged at the shade.

"Of course," she said, "it's north exposure, but that makes it cool in summer."

The shade stuck, then rolled up with a stuttering noise.

"And in the winter it's warm. Mr. Peters never was cold. He was here five years. He used to light the fire now and then. The register is there, behind that chair. The furnace heats good. A hot air furnace."

Mason stood just inside the door. Opposite, against that bare wall, a bookcase with a glass door had held all his books and all Dicky's. One afternoon a tower of blocks had fallen and broken the glass; every year some of the books would change; for new ones arrived at Christmas time, and others were outgrown. He remembered names: Henty, Edward S. Ellis, *The Rover Boys*. First of all there had been fairy tales: *The Green Fairy Book*, *The Red Fairy Book*. But his mother thought they were silly things to put into a child's mind, and bought him the *Rollo* series and other books from which he could absorb information.

Dicky did not like to read; but Mason received with docility what was given

him. Soon he began to read his sister's books, and liked them very much. He was fond of playing with his sister, and sometimes used to cut out paper dolls. But one day some of Dicky's friends discovered him and jeered, and he did it no more.

Mrs. Pollock was saying:

"Of course the bed is good. I had new springs put in last year. Mr. Peters and I got on fine. His brother died in Terre Haute and he had to go home to stay with his father."

There were so many memories in the room that they seemed to drift from the walls like smoke. Mason said: "Yes, it's very nice." On Christmas Eve, Dicky and he hung their stockings in the fireplace, and in the morning found them bulging. Often they agreed to stay awake in order to see Santa Claus, but they never did. And then there were the golden dreams in the night, and on Christmas morning the fresh fire, and the toys on the floor, and the white, glistening trees outside on which sparrows chattered. His father would come up, smoking a cigar, and would crawl on the floor among the tin railway tracks, his bald head smooth and shiny in the firelight.

Now relatives said of Dicky: "He is just like his father." Mason smiled: when people spoke of him, if they did at all, they hesitated. He was like no one. Perhaps he resembled his mother just a little; for she had been dark and thin. Helen was like her father in some ways, even if she was dark, and so nervous and petulant and unhappy. And Jack was going to be just like her: he had the same mouth.

Years went on and on and on. After a few more, Jack would be in college. Mason remembered the year in which both his father and mother had died, within a few months of each other. He was in California at the time, Dicky at Yale, Helen already married to Temple Curle and living in Detroit. Shortly after that the house had been sold and the furniture; for none of them wanted to live in Chicago. As children, they had

planned always to live in the same block, to have parties together; but each was living now in a different part of America.

Mrs. Pollock was talking, but Mason did not hear. As a boy, he thought that he would be a writer or something like that. He did not want to go into business. But he had never written a word, and he had gone into business. Years, years, years. They seemed to have gone by at a distance without touching him. He had never been in love and he had never had a close friend. He had of course seen something of Dicky during the year in which he tried to live in New York. But his lungs were too weak, and he had returned to California. At last he found that he could stand the San Francisco climate, and now for five years he had been there, working in an advertising agency. He lived in Berkeley, on the top floor of a house north of the campus. Every day he commuted to San Francisco. Dicky, living in New Jersey, commuted every day to New York. Helen spent her time in Europe, Florida, sometimes Detroit. For years Dicky and Helen had not seen each other, and they did not care to.

"Of course," Mrs. Pollock was saying, "ten a week is very cheap. It's a big room. You can see how clean it is."

"Yes," he muttered, "I see."

Dicky hurrying to dress in the morning, standing in his underclothes and pulling his stockings up; the gray days when the wind came from the lake and pounded down the chimney; the tin pans they used to put outside the window in winter to see if they would break when the water in them froze. And in summer, the big flies brumming in the bars of sunlight, tapping the pane, touching the knotted cord of the shade and making it swing. Helen, his mother, his father, the maids. After he and Dicky had the measles, they had fumigated the room, and for several days there had been a funny smell. Dicky standing in the doorway, wrinkling his nose, sniffing, saying: "Oh Mason!" his yellow hair tangled.

"And if you'd like to move right in, the bed of course is made."

Mason walked toward the door. He wanted to go out.

"I'm not certain. I could let you know by telephone if I decide to take it. I—I think not. I—don't know."

As he walked down the stairs, he remembered how he had hated algebra, and how he had wept one day because he had flunked an examination. Dicky had seen his red eyes at luncheon.

He wanted to go out. It was stifling in this house. There were all sorts of smells. Cooking.

A woman in a kimono stood in the door of his sister's room. She said: "Good morning, Mrs. Pollock," and then looked at him.

He began to hurry down the stairs. The maid was in the hall touching the front door with a feather duster. She stood aside.

Mason waited until Mrs. Pollock came down. He disliked all these people. Oh, how he wanted to get out! It seemed as if an hour passed while Mrs. Pollock descended the stairs. At last she stood beside him and he opened the door. The hot air rushed against his face. He stepped into the vestibule without looking behind. Once, long ago—

"Well, if you decide to take it, you can telephone."

He went down the steps and walked toward State Street. The sunlight was burning, the air stagnant. It was almost noon.



## Many Words

*By Marguerite Wilkinson*

*M*ANY words I have spoken  
 To you, O Beloved,  
 And all have been true  
 As the needle of the compass  
 Pointing one way forever;  
 But if ever I should say  
 That I do not love you,  
 Then, though I speak  
 With the tongue of the thunder,  
 Then, though I wear  
 The look of the lightning,  
 Do not believe me.



**CITIZEN**—*A man who seeks to strike a happy medium between being beaten up by bandits and beaten up by the police.*

# The Quarrel

By Muna Lee

HER hands listless in her lap, her eyes on the curtain blowing in and out of the window across the court, she went over in her mind the details of this last quarrel. She went over them with a sort of shame for occupying herself, now that the storm of anger had blown over, with such trivialities; vainly trying to find for herself or for him some excuse for the passionate outburst with which he had hurled himself out of the door and the icy anger with which she had answered his initial half-careless reproach.

There was no excuse. There had never been any excuse, not from that first time when he had seized upon a thoughtless phrase of hers and twisted it into a grotesque misconception which she had contemptuously refused to rectify—until the sudden irrelevant kiss, the protestations, the flood of passionate tenderness which swept away the bitter words like wreckage in a flood.

Always there was the flood of passionate tenderness. It was against that, more even than against the debasing habit of trivial quarrel, that she was rebelling now. It was this lack of decision, this unsteadiness, this inconclusiveness, which was overwhelming her with a sense of hopeless defeat. It would be better, she thought wearily, for their love to dash itself headlong into one final tragedy than to perpetuate itself by anti-climax.

Of that ultimate fact of love, there was, of course, no doubt; not even when passionate or contemptuous words denied it. Certainly she was making no effort to minimize to herself the inevitable tragedy which both should face, facing life separately—that supreme fact of love towered stark above all

misunderstanding—but she paused before the realization that, to preserve love's integrity, they must rid themselves of this corrosive pettiness; and it seemed that for them a clean break (the phrase dominated her fancy) was the only method.

Of course, there was the difficulty of making him see this as she saw it. There flashed into her consciousness a sudden vision of his coming, repentant, eager-eyed, his boyishness overflowing into gay caresses, while his look besought the forgiveness to which he trusted himself—she saw as vividly her own melting, wet-eyed but with a sudden sense of peace, into his outstretched arms.

"Dear—," she heard his voice break on a note of unutterable tenderness—

It should not be! She shook off the fancy as if it were something tangible, enmeshing her against flight. For his sake, for her sake, it should not be. Since he could not realize her point of view, it was better not to explain, better not to afford opportunity for another quarrel, better to take the burden of judgment upon herself, and go, go now, quietly and without anger (how far-off that anger of the morning seemed!) and let everything, except the inevitable pain, end once and forever!

She would go. Today? Tomorrow? She dallied with the decision—It did not matter. She would not fall this time into the weakness of reconciliation; she would free them both, leave to both their lives' scope and breadth—She would go!

Having reached her decision she felt that she had never loved him so truly nor so deeply. She was free now to love him forever, with a love that breath and



handling should not mar. She remembered him as she had seen him first, slender and dark-eyed, his head proudly lifted with something of the eternal arrogance of youth. Tears clutched at her heart with the memory. That endearing youthfulness of his should no longer be slowly destroyed by dalliance; he must face grief, as she must face it, but he too would have the consolation of a love once more free to idealize and worship. Beauty should again be flawless beauty for them—this beauty which they had stained and torn; this goddess that they had made into a household drudge and stormed at for petty faults.

In short—she caught herself up with a brusque impatience—they should be free to dream of each other once again, without the contradictory reality of each other's presence.

It was done. She rose from the window-seat and glanced at the clock. Al-

ready it was time for him to be here. She stiffened a little, instinctively bracing herself against the repentance and soft words that were sure to come. A little thrill of excitement shook her as she heard his footsteps running lightly up the stairs. Already she felt that their lives were divided; she felt her life to be one of those pieces of broken rock.

The door opened softly, and he stood there an instant, his eyes upon hers with the look of a child pleading with its mother to be understood, to be loved, to be protected against the shame and bitterness of life. She could not disappoint that look—he was her husband, her lover, her little boy. . . . Tears surged in her throat. Wet-eyed, but with a sudden sense of peace, she melted into his outstretched arms.

"Dear—!" His voice broke on a note of unutterable tenderness.



## Old Age

*By Edward H. Pfeiffer*

I HAVE seen love go down the street a-begging,  
I have seen love lie writhing at my door.  
But every love I see has winged sandals  
And tarries now for tired feet no more.

I have known love— See how she rushes past me!  
She draws her beauty from me in a cloud.  
I have known love to kiss me in the darkness . . .  
I wonder will she kiss me in the shroud?



# Rubies in Crystal

*By Grace H. Flandrau*

## I

THERE was something about his morning coat that was so intensely like him. She had not known anyone before she married, at least not well, who wore one. In Westport they mostly didn't.

When he asked her to marry him it was as unthinkable to her, as it would have been to Westport, that she should refuse. As soon refuse God, or George Washington if he should come back to earth. He was the wonder and admiration of the town. He was a diplomat and had known kings and queens. A real diplomat, not a bad political joke, and he had made elaborate studies in Paris when other boys as rich as he would have gone to the devil on Broadway.

But that was long before—long before he chose, whimsically, to spend a summer in the village of his birth. After years of disdain a Scarth had returned to Westport.

He brought servants and reopened the old house. He was all that Westport could have expected. He was grave and courtly, quiet and at the same time grand. His clothes partook of his incredible perfection. So did his morals, although it is possible that Westport, in extolling them, experienced a certain disappointment here. After all, a man who has lived so long in foreign cities—Westport, however, concealed its dissatisfaction and acclaimed the fact that he even went to church. Every Sunday his discreet bald spot reflected the ruby light of the Scarth memorial window from one corner of the Scarth pew, and his flawless morning coat exuded sanctity.

S. Set—June—5

That he should have chosen Lily was, faintly, a second disappointment. When we create deities, we expect them to repay us with disdain. The least they can do is to despise us, else we are cheated of our reverence. Westport couldn't see why he had done it, with all his money and the kings and queens. Lily was nice enough, pretty in a simple Westport way, with yellow curls. But that was all. Lily sometimes wondered too, especially after they were married. It didn't even seem to be the yellow curls, at least not to any indecorous extent. Tilden was as decorous in pajamas as in a morning coat.

At any rate he did ask her to marry him. And when Lily gave her gold head and twenty years into his exalted keeping the town certainly hoped she appreciated the honor done her.

## II

THE legation windows were open, and floods and floods of gay, foreign sunshine poured into the high-ceilinged room. They were entertaining at luncheon for the new Italian. Tilden had been stepping about in his morning coat for an hour arranging the flowers and the place cards. He would know to the last subtle distinction where each guest should sit, rank upon rank. He went about his business, not breathing hard—Tilden never breathed hard—but with a consecrated earnestness. She thought she had never seen such clean fingernails, clean and white and even—of course he never committed the vulgarity of polishing them. He smelled faintly of toilet vinegar, he wore white gaiters and a white line around his waistcoat.

His morning coat fitted beyond belief. He was really quite bald.

She stood looking down the table. Filet lace and a Dresden epergne with fruit and flowers. The Dresden piece only used in the daytime, silver at night. The bewildering sunshine caught and twinkling in the ruby red of the Bohemian wine glasses. Ruby red, ruby red light, glowing hotter than the ruby light through the Scarth memorial window. "In memoriam, Zacariah Phineas Scarth, Sarah Deborah Scarth"; then the Doxology, "Praise God from whom—" A smell of varnish and lilies, and pretty soon the Sunday gravy and sweet potatoes. Westport.

No, this was another ruby light, dancing in the wine glasses where it belonged. Ah, and the smell of mimosa flowers, sweet, sweet! On her right would sit Amioti, on her left the nice old Frenchman. Then Madame Cusac, then de Palma. Over there, Mme. de Palma, and next—next— Her heart did a giddy swerve. Something caught her breath. Intoxicating became the mimosa and the orange flower sweetness of the freesias blooming in the Dresden epergne. She was dizzy with the giddy, singing sunshine rioting in glass and silver.

She stepped through the French window onto a small balcony of graystone overlooking the street. An old woman passed with a basket of flowers strapped to her back, bright little bunches tied together in hard knots and a string of little dead birds over one arm.

"Niña, roses and beautiful gardenias—cheap, cheap! Or some little birds to breakfast on—Niña!"

The sky blue, a snowy breeze from the mountain, and the smell of sunshine on hot flowers. Presently, presently he would come, he would be there!

The sun shone straight on Tilden's bald spot, but not into his eyes. You couldn't imagine it shining into his eyes at a diplomatic luncheon. Or anything happening to him. About him all things would be perfect. He was talking gravely and pleasantly, leaning first to this side, then to that. Lily too was

talking and laughing, not too much. He had told her to be restrained. But it was hard to be restrained today, knowing what she knew. Knowing the whole monstrous, gallant, shameless sweetness of what she knew. Hard to be restrained when she was drunk, drunk, drunk.

"What is it, eh, eh? What is it that's going on in that charming head?" squeaked old Piroigne, dean of the corps and soon to be retired. He quizzed her, looking into her eyes, taking advantage of his pose of old man. She knew that her eyes were too bright, too dazzling.

"Nothing, dear Baron, nothing."

"Nothing, eh? That's what women always say. I've seen it before in my life," he sighed. "*Sacré tonnerre*, what a thing it is to get old! What a damnable thing!"

He turned away from her querulously. Poor old thing! Was it awful to get old? She didn't know. It had nothing to do with her.

### III

THEY looked at each other but four times during lunch. Once when they sat down. How gay and caressing his eyes were, at once humble and daring. Again when the fish went out—ah, she had not eaten any of it! She could not eat food today. Then a non-committal glance over the *salade*. Why so non-committal? Had anything happened? Where things no longer as they had been? No, she had found his eyes again, just now. They were hungry, almost stern. She was comforted. Tilden was talking.

"No, just for a few days. We're leaving tomorrow. Goncourt thinks there may be some quail."

Tilden was going away. He was going off with three or four colleagues into the country. Had that been in the back of her mind all during luncheon? She wondered. She had not consciously thought of it. She was glad that he had heard it that way. She would have been ashamed to tell him outright. But why

should he know? Why did she wish him to know it? What did she want? She, the wife of Tilden Scarth, wife of the *chargé*. It was monstrous. She was a monstrous woman. What would all these so fine and proper people say if they had any idea?

But there had been really nothing, not so much as a word. Just the knowledge, pulsing back and forth between him and her like crackling, diabolical lightning.

#### IV

THEY took coffee on the inner balcony, hanging over the courtyard. A balcony smothered round with thick plants, shaded by a gay awning, red and white. It was cool in spite of the blazing sun. The fountain cooled it and that breeze from the hills. And as though the smell of the orange blossoms were not enough, a wanton, drooping, yellow, depraved mimosa set a trap for the very angels in Paradise with its enchanted fragrance.

In continental fashion the men joined the women for coffee. She poured it from the small silver coffee pot with the hot handle. Every little figure in the wrought silver stood out today, startlingly plain. It was as though she had never seen them before—sweet little figures, how sweet they were! Also the thick, brown coffee, strong and aromatic. Her hands trembled a little and the egg shell cups rattled on their saucers.

He was just inside the yellow salon talking to Piroigne. Short, straight nose and full lips. And he wasn't too big. His smile was caressing, even with Piroigne. Caressing eyes and smile—gay, debonair, intoxicating he was, like the county, like this life so undreamed of in Westport! Even Piroigne was captivated. She could see his hand on the young man's knee. She was jealous.

They had met only three times. Once at the opera. She had seen him across the foyer. He was looking at her. She knew he would come. He came swiftly and spoke to her hostess.

"This is Diego, Lily. Mrs. Scarth has heard the Ravallos speak," and so on.

He bowed low, appraising, adoring. In the instant of his greeting he seemed to observe, lovingly, all of her, her golden hair, her ankles, her smooth breast. Next at a tea. There were vague, breathless words on a sofa about—who knows what they were about? Nothing. His arm touched hers as they sat. Accidentally, of course. Of course if he had known it he would have moved. If she had thought he knew it she would have moved. But she did not think so and she did not move. It was too sweet.

They talked and their words were like nothing or like some nondescript thing flung over a hot-bed under which little, fragrant plants were springing up quickly. The very next day she met him on the street. She had been sure when she went out she would meet him. A smile and a question in his eyes, something reverential and impudent, and he passed by, leaving her heart pounding hard thumps that jarred the back of her neck.

The luncheon today was an accident, a fated accident. Someone had failed at the last moment. Tilden said:

"I wonder who we can get, that is, whom. Awkward at the very last—"

She said, "I wonder." Irrationally, as they never had him, she thought, "Tilden will now suggest Diego."

He did. A person, he said, of no importance, but possible. And Diego had come. Soon they would say something to each other. What she did not know. Or perhaps they wouldn't say it. Mysterious raptures would envelop them beyond the scope of speech. Nor was she thinking of caresses. Not thinking of them.

It was the French minstress who brought it about. "Will you dine with us tomorrow, child, since you are to be alone?"

"Thank you, Madame, I will come with pleasure."



"Until then, *chère petite*. As you see, I am leaving Piriogne behind for bridge." And to Diego who stood near her, hat in hand, "May I set you down somewhere, Monsieur?"

"I thank you, my own car is here."

Then they were alone. From the salon came the voices of the players—"Three spades—no, never Burgundy—*Voyons, voyons*—my trick, I think—" The sunlight poured in upon them and lay in still, dazzling pools on the red Turkey carpet and marquetry floor. A tall footman crossed the hall silently behind them with a tray of liqueurs—the dregs of mint and brandy gleaming like emeralds and blood red rubies in the stems of the small glasses. Silently he disappeared. Her gold hair blazed in

the sunlight and the pearl gray of her dress dissolved—ethereal.

"Yellow hair," he murmured, "we who are dark must love it. Oh, it is beautiful!"

She raised her charged eyes to his. Unspoken things grew loud between them. Upon its perfect sound came a thin belated tinkle of speech, late because emotion had outrun it. Speech lagged along, dotting the i's. But breathless, worshipful:

"Tomorrow night—afterward? At the little gate—at eleven? At twelve?"

Terrified, she whispered back, "At twelve."

Oh Westport! Oh, horror! Oh, rubies dissolved in crystal and stained glass!



## Time's Way

By Hortense Flexner

THIS night when I so wearily  
Climb up the stairs to sleep,  
Shall gather magic in its wake,  
Stand with the shadow days that make  
Remembrance gentle, for the sake  
Of what it has to keep.

The heaviness that is my mind,  
The awkward things I do,  
Will all be lost—but I shall know  
An orange moon was tipping low,  
And that I stood to watch it go,  
While a far train whistle blew.

And I shall see across the years  
Held in a misty light,  
A window and the moon and me,  
So young! I shall sigh pleasantly,  
And never, never think to be  
Old as I am to-night!



# To Be Perfectly Frank

[A Comedy in One Act]

By Josephine A. Meyer

## CHARACTERS

CHARLIE PLUNE, a youth

PHILOMENA PLUNE, his sister, a spinster

PRESCOTT BIGGES, a bachelor

TIME, the present

**T**HE scene is the comfortable, middle-class, uninspired "sitting room" of the Plunes. The only piece of furniture in it worth mentioning is the telephone, which has a speaking part but is not ringing as the curtain rises.

No, it is PRESCOTT BIGGES who is talking. He is a nice-looking, middle-aged man who is trying to hold his reputation as a confirmed bachelor. Of late years he has been apt to put too much faith in the progressive frosting of his thinning hair. He is dressed comfortably and feels very much at home. He looks happy and animated because he likes to talk and give advice. He has slipped through life peacefully and is proud of his negativity. Most of his advice is on how to escape trouble. Just now he is making a tremendous impression upon a rather dull but extremely pleasant young man who is listening to him with strained and almost tragic attention. This is CHARLIE PLUNE. His sister, PHILOMENA, is sitting somewhere in the room so inconspicuously knitting that you do not at once notice she is there.

PRESCOTT

(While the curtain is still in the ascent.) . . . each and every variety. Lord, some of them have been clever! But here I am at forty-five, still a bachelor.

CHARLIE

I wish I was forty-five.

PRESCOTT

That fact alone wouldn't save you.

CHARLIE

(Guilelessly.) No, I suppose there are middle-aged women out after elderly husbands, too.

PRESCOTT

(Coldly.) I suppose there are.

CHARLIE

(Unaware of the chill.) And they're even worse than the young ones, aren't they? Gee! You must be slick! I suppose experience is everything.

PRESCOTT

I didn't have experience when I started.

CHARLIE

That's so. What was it then? You're so entertaining and—and bright—clever—I should think you'd have been pestered to death.

PRESCOTT  
(Mollified.) Well, I kept my head.

CHARLIE  
How?

PRESCOTT  
In the first place I did not permit myself to be flattered.

CHARLIE  
How can you tell you're being flattered?

PRESCOTT  
Always distrust a woman who openly admires you.

CHARLIE  
But doesn't that make things a bit—flat?

PRESCOTT  
Flat things are generally safe. Besides it needn't be flat. A comedy is not flat even when you know it's a comedy. And that's what love is. Just keep remembering that. It's been rehearsed for ages; every gesture is studied, every trick is used for what it's worth. Enjoy it, but head off the big scene.

CHARLIE  
(Not without reason.) I don't get you.

PRESCOTT  
Well—no matter how serious it seems to be getting, just remember you're acting and, above all, that *she's* acting.

CHARLIE  
But suppose she isn't?

PRESCOTT  
She is.

CHARLIE  
Always?

PRESCOTT  
Always.

(Yes, you may indulge your inclination to glance at PHILOMENA here. She is knitting industriously and does not look up. You may note how simply she dresses and that she is several years older than CHARLIE. You may wonder what she thinks of this remark, but if

the actress obeys this stage direction you will continue to wonder without a clue.)

CHARLIE  
(Gloomily.) Gosh.

PRESCOTT  
Oh, cheer up! I said comedy. It's a pretty game. With a little study you can play it with skill and perfect safety. There isn't a gambit I don't know.

CHARLIE  
All I ask is, teach me which one Rosalie is going to spring on me to-night.

PRESCOTT  
Why—that depends on so many things.

CHARLIE  
She's about that tall, blonde—round, you know, not fat, but not thin either.

PRESCOTT  
Pretty?

CHARLIE  
(Kindling.) She's beautiful. She has big eyes, sort of blue gray with soft, long black eyelashes, and a red mouth, sort of ripe, you know, and white teeth, small, separated—like a cute little mouse or something—

(Charlie breaks off. PHILOMENA, for a fraction of a second, has raised her eyes to look at him. PRESCOTT is regarding him with the sympathetic contempt of the master watching the tyro make a mess of it.)

PRESCOTT  
I suppose you realize you are lost?

CHARLIE  
Me? Why? You think I'm in love with her? Maybe I am. But I don't want to marry her. I'm only twenty-two. I'm not earning enough. I want to look around. (In one desperate squeak.) And besides I never thought of a blonde wife. I always pictured her with brown hair.

PRESCOTT  
It may turn brown after you're married.

CHARLIE

(*Indignantly.*) She doesn't bleach. She's not that sort. She's—she's the real goods. She's—she's—(he gurgles for want of a vocabulary).

PRESCOTT

You'd better stay home to-night.

CHARLIE

Oh, you don't understand. Can't I think her a—a peach, without wanting to eat peaches for the rest of my life? I want to be pals with her like you and Phil.

(*PRESCOTT looks at PHILOMENA amiably. She smiles back comfortably. It is all safe and domesticated.*)

PRESCOTT

My dear Charlie, you've fatally miscast your comedy. Don't try to make a pal out of a peach with "ripe" red lips and all the other attributes of Venus.

(*PHILOMENA shifts her work and bends over it woodenly.*)

CHARLIE

But that would make it flat again. And you can't expect a young chap of my age to play safe by falling in love only with old maids—like Phil.

PRESCOTT

(*Horried at his dangerous ignorance.*) Play safe! A boy of your age and equipment! Oh Lord! Beware of them over thirty. Especially when they're frank about their age. I knew a woman once who caught just such a little unsophisticated ass as you by lying about her age on the wrong side. She kept saying she was thirty-two when the family Bible had her down as thirty-one. Of course shortly after they were married she turned twenty-five and has remained there till now he is three years older than she is. Yes, I think a pretty good rule for you to take to heart is: Look out for danger when they're frank and the older they get the franker they are.

CHARLIE

Thank goodness, Rosalie is only twenty.

PRESCOTT

Be careful you don't take advantage of her childlike innocence. Once I knew of a young girl who circulated the report that she was engaged to a man who called on her twice a week. When he asked her how the report got around she said she always thought being called on twice a week was being engaged. She looked so frightened and tearful and was so afraid she had compromised herself that to soothe her he said he only wished they were engaged. And that settled him.

CHARLIE

(*Sighing.*) I suppose it's second nature to say "I wish we were engaged."

PRESCOTT

Education is the control of second nature. I never said it.

CHARLIE

You're awfully lucky.

PRESCOTT

No, intelligent.

CHARLIE

(*Appraisingly.*) Were you ever good looking?

PRESCOTT

(*Stung.*) What?

CHARLIE

When you were young, I mean.

PRESCOTT

(*Sarcastically.*) I suppose it's hard to believe of the grandfather gargoyle I am now.

CHARLIE

(*Scared.*) Oh, I beg your pardon—I didn't mean—that is, you—you are really awfully nice looking now—and well-preserved and—

PRESCOTT

(*Slowly and impressively.*) Some day you'll understand the danger of possessing an air of maturity. It is a



challenge to every woman, far more irresistible than callow youth. At my age even married men are not safe. As for bachelors—only constant watchfulness and wide experience has saved me.

*(He has grown heated and boastful in a way that would make us dislike him if we weren't sorry for him. With some apprehension we glance at PHILOMENA. She is still knitting.)*

CHARLIE

Yes, yes, I realize that. I didn't mean to imply—I'm just plain scared at what you've been telling me. Now let's see if I've got it all straight. They can get awfully frank with you, boast about their age, report themselves engaged to you. What else?

PRESCOTT

*(Still somewhat peevishly.)* Oh, use your bean. You've got to sense the approach. Let me tell you this though. The safer you feel, the greater your peril.

CHARLIE

Yes. I'll remember. But would you mind being more—specific. For example, I heard of a girl who was caught fainting in a fellow's arms—on purpose.

PRESCOTT

You probably saw it on the stage and forgot the point—or never got it. She got John Tanner to kiss her that way.

CHARLIE

In a faint—how could she?

PRESCOTT

Well, don't ever let any girl faint on you.

CHARLIE

*(Considering it.)* Oh, I don't know. I wouldn't mind. Only Rosalie isn't that sort. Women don't faint much outside of plays and books nowadays, do they?

PRESCOTT

No. They read more. Modern English novelists. And Freud.

CHARLIE

*(Blankly.)* Oh.

PRESCOTT

But they still cry. It will be a great day for you when you come safely through your first baptism of tears.

CHARLIE

*(Disturbed.)* Gee.

PRESCOTT

Or the brave little twisted smile. Pray hard when you see that.

CHARLIE

*(Suddenly conscience-stricken.)* Say, aren't we pretty rotten, assuming they never mean anything at all?

PRESCOTT

Never mean anything? They're in deadly earnest. That's the only way to play comedy with success. It's the men who make the mistake of never meaning anything. That's what saved me. I meant something. I meant to get away—every time.

CHARLIE

I wish I had your brain. Lord, look at the time! I'll be late and she'll be furious.

PRESCOTT

You'll be lucky if she is, instead of being hurt.

CHARLIE

Oh, I'm safe to-night. I've learned a lot, thanks to you. I'll hire you to come and give me a lesson every night. Good-bye. 'Bye Phil!

PRESCOTT

Good luck!

*(Exit CHARLIE in haste, looking muddled but hopeful. There is a little silence in the room while PHILOMENA continues to knit and PRESCOTT smugly reviews his memory of the interview, amply appreciating his own part in it. Unconsciously he rises and takes out a cigarette. He has lit it before it occurs to him to do the courteous.)*

PRESCOTT

*(Apologetically, his voice automatic—)*

*ally sounding the deeper notes which proclaim a man's additional masculinity in addressing a woman.)*

Oh, Phil. I'm so sorry. I beg your pardon. May I?

*(He holds the cigarette poised tentatively ready to make the sacrifice at her word. Of course, as he has been accustomed to smoke in her presence, the gesture lacks sincerity.)*

PHILOMENA

*(Crisply.)* Why not? The question is—may I?

PRESCOTT

*(Amazed.)* You?—You smoke, Phil?

PHILOMENA

*(Indulgently.)* After all these months there is something you have to learn about me, isn't there, Press?

*(She drops her knitting expectantly. He offers her his cigarette case. She helps herself. He goes to light a match.)*

No, Press. Don't waste matches. I can light it from yours.

*(Their fingers touch, their eyes are near, their mouths puckered, but they are two cigarette-lengths apart. PHILOMENA suddenly jerks away her head and blows a puff of smoke.)*

PRESCOTT

*(Casually.)* Lit up?

PHILOMENA

*(Not so casually.)* All afire.

PRESCOTT

*(Alert.)* All a-smoke, you mean. *(and before she can deny it.)* You smoke well.

PHILOMENA

I've had twenty years' practice.

PRESCOTT

I suppose you used to smoke yourself to sleep in your cradle.

PHILOMENA

I was twelve when I started my first cigarette.

PRESCOTT

Twelve—and twenty. Nothing doing. You can't put that over. You're not thirty yet.

PHILOMENA

And that would make me thirty-two. *(She smiles, that brave little twisted smile, beneath which he obviously squirms.)*

I've—I've really short-changed you, Press. I'm—I'm thirty-three.

PRESCOTT

*(Not looking at her.)*  
You're kidding.

PHILOMENA

*(Simply.)* There's the family Bible. *(Then she points vaguely at the book case.)*

PRESCOTT

*(In puzzled admiration.)* What an unexpected creature you are, Phil.

PHILOMENA

I? Oh, no. I'm terribly conventional.

PRESCOTT

I thought that. And I thought you were reserved and now—Well, you're the last person I thought to—to admit her real age and to—to smoke.

PHILOMENA

Oh, the smoking—that's been a habit. I've concealed it from you, thinking you disapproved. Then suddenly, to-night—somehow—well, I rather felt I didn't want to conceal it any longer. I saw it was being—sneaky. I dare say, in a way it was a sort of penance, too, that made me tell you my age.

PRESCOTT

*(Eyeing her, charmed.)* What a quaint idea! You little Puritan!

PHILOMENA *(looks at him, then looks away with a whimsical distress that makes her seem younger. Finally she crushes the cigarette and leans forward with wide, candid eyes in which there is a hint of fright.)*

Press. That's not all. I'm going to

confess everything. *(Then, swiftly, as he seems about to flinch she holds out her knitting.)* This.

PRESCOTT

*(A little stupidly.)* That?

PHILOMENA

Yes, can't you guess what it is?

PRESCOTT

*(Profoundly embarrassed.)* A—a sweater? It's too big for a sock, isn't it?

PHILOMENA

*(Examining her work interestedly.)* Do you think it could become a sweater?

PRESCOTT

What was it supposed to be?

PHILOMENA

Anything it turned into.

PRESCOTT

Is that the usual method of knitting?

PHILOMENA

No, though it is always something of a gamble, I hear. You see this—this is a species of art for art's sake. I knit to knit—not to make anything.

PRESCOTT

*(Dubiously.)* I've heard it's good for the nerves, but—

PHILOMENA

Yes, that's why I took it up.

PRESCOTT

But—I was about to add—I've always remarked about you that you are anything but the average nervous woman.

PHILOMENA

Oh, no. I didn't take it up for my nerves.

PRESCOTT

*(Befogged.)* I beg your pardon?

PHILOMENA

It was for yours. Men feel so much safer with a knitting woman. A barking dog and a knitting woman.

PRESCOTT

*(Finding an unpleasant association in the word.)* Safer?

PHILOMENA

*(Calmly.)* Come, admit it. You've lived all your life in dread of designing women. I had to prove to you my intention of remaining an old maid. I adopted knitting as the outward symbol accepted by the ages.

PRESCOTT

*(Beaming.)* By jove, Phil, you leave nothing unsaid, do you?

PHILOMENA

*(Sincerely.)* Friendship is not friendship unless it is based on perfect understanding. I want to be utterly frank with you.

PRESCOTT

*(Aware of an overtone.)* Frank?

PHILOMENA

*(Pulling suddenly at her knitting.)* Damn! *(Looks up sheepishly.)* You're learning the worst of me to-night. I don't often swear, but you don't know the tragedy of a beginner who drops stitches! There goes more! Oh this hateful stuff! *(With a sudden, pettish gesture she casts it angrily to the floor.)*

PRESCOTT

*(Picks it up and looks reproving.)* I thought you said there was nothing the matter with your nerves?

PHILOMENA

*(Pouting.)* There isn't. *(Hangs her head.)* There wasn't. *(With wilful abandon.)* I can lie when I want to, I suppose. I can't be expected to be frank all the time!

*(PRESCOTT turns away to conceal a smile he rather hopes she may get a glimpse of in the mirror. Its value is that he is concealing its tender superiority, but he feels it is a pity she must miss it. As a matter of fact, she doesn't.)*

PRESCOTT

*(In deep, gentle tones.)* Pull yourself together, Phil.

PHILOMENA

(Bitterly.) That's easily said.

PRESCOTT

But over a bit of knitting whose destiny is after all of such—such problematical interest to you! Really, dear—that is, my dear Phil—that's childish.

PHILOMENA

(Picks sulkily at the worsted.) It's not only that. I'm—I'm ashamed—

PRESCOTT

(Very kindly.) There's nothing to be ashamed of. I myself often lose my temper like that—over trifles.

PHILOMENA

(Incredulously.) You?

PRESCOTT

(The implication is "Even I!") Indeed, yes.

(PHILOMENA is silent a moment which gives her sullen expression a chance to clear without indecent haste. When she looks up it is with a rather chastened sadness.)

PHILOMENA

Forgive me. It was ill-temper. I wonder if you—if men—Oh, well—! (She breaks off but resumes with some fierceness.) It isn't my fault that they christened me Philomena!

PRESCOTT

Why, Phil! You don't object to your delightful name?

PHILOMENA

(Angrily.) Delightful! Can't you imagine that even the best joke in the world would pall if you had to hear it every day of your life. And my name is a poor joke. (Mincing the words.) Philomena Plune!

PRESCOTT

(Correcting.) Phil Plune. It's not a joke. It's deliciously intriguing.

PHILOMENA

You sound as though you were trying to get a child enthusiastic over a nice

dose of medicine. Oh, don't I know? Even those who are responsible for it are so utterly disillusioned they don't waste any opportunity to express their regrets before me.

PRESCOTT

What good does that do. It was their fault.

PHILOMENA

They're at me to change it.

PRESCOTT

Why don't you?

PHILOMENA

To what?

PRESCOTT

(Suddenly flustered but recovering.) Why not ask them?

PHILOMENA

Oh, they've made suggestions, without my asking. (Sighs.) None feasible.

PRESCOTT

(Interrupting hastily.) After all, I can sympathize with you. Take my own name—I mean—there's my name—Bigges. A ridiculous name, really. So self-important. Yet if I should change it I'd feel as if I were altering my personality.

PHILOMENA

(Gravely.) I think Bigges is a splendid name.

PRESCOTT

(Trying to dismiss the subject.) And I think your name is lovely. So we're even.

PHILOMENA

One of the names my family suggested—

PRESCOTT

Pay no attention to them.

PHILOMENA

(Going right on.) Is Schmalhausen. But I'll never come to that.

PRESCOTT

(Astonished in two dimensions.) Is there such a name?



PHILOMENA

(*Not smiling.*) It goes with a delicatessen store and a lot of fat, also a talent for pinochle. And, most important, some valuable real estate.

PRESCOTT

Have you—is there any chance of your assuming these—er misfortunes?

PHILOMENA

(*Tensely.*) Day and night, they hound me.

PRESCOTT

(*Sympathetically.*) Poor old Phil.

PHILOMENA

(*Wearily.*) Oh—I suppose some day you'll be telling me Philomena Plune Schmalhausen is a deliciously intriguing name.

PRESCOTT

But you just now said—

PHILOMENA

(*Fretfully.*) Why do you insist upon believing I mean all I say?

PRESCOTT

(*Reproachfully, feeling she is getting a bit out of hand.*) Because you always have seemed to me to be a perfectly rational, reliable woman, not without some intelligence—

PHILOMENA

(*Snapping.*) Intelligence? I haven't a spark. Because I'm clever you think I'm intelligent. How dare you analyze me, anyway, or attempt to tell me what I am when I don't know, myself? I'm a complex mass of badly correlated desires and instincts. I'm a sensible, wholesome, normal, quiet person. I'm—I'm—very unhappy.

PRESCOTT

(*Rising and battling with a nervous sense of loss.*)

What you need is a good night's rest. I've been a brute to keep you up so long.

PHILOMENA

Perhaps. (*She pulls the knitting*

*feverishly to her and begins to work.*) Good night, Press.

PRESCOTT

(*Who has made no actual move toward the door sees his precipitate flight is too obvious. It would be her victory if he departed now. Besides she, he sees, has lost her head. She is playing her hand desperately, badly. He can afford to be generous.*)

I shall only go if you are really tired enough to want to go to bed.

PHILOMENA

Tired? Because I have haggard lines on my face? And rings under my eyes? That's not fatigue—Press. Look again.

(*She lifts her face to him, with the brave, slow motion of the martyr raising himself above earthly pain to the contemplation of the Ideal. They stare at each other dramatically for a long moment. Then swiftly her head bends forward as though she were hiding a poignant rush of tears.*)

PRESCOTT

(*Touched.*) Phil, dear—what is it?

PHILOMENA

(*Averting her face.*) Nothing—nothing. (*She starts knitting again, violently.*)

PRESCOTT

(*Placing his hand over hers.*) Cut out this fake work! (*He speaks masterfully.*)

PHILOMENA

(*Defiantly.*) It's not fake. It's a sweater for Charlie. He'll want it for his hike, Sunday. So don't interrupt me—and don't rip it. Take your hand away!

(*At this last command, his hand which was about to release hers in masculine awe of feminine handiwork, now grips hers tighter. As she pulls away from him, he comes nearer to her. As she keeps her face turned away, he tries to peer into it. He is practically kneeling before her.*)

PRESCOTT

(*With all the roughness he can command.*) But you said—

PHILOMENA

I said! I said! Every half hour I alter, I tell you! No it's every five minutes. Ten minutes ago this was a botch because it was nice to confess to you that I was just showing off with it. Now it's a sweater because I need it—or will, tomorrow night when I go out with Augustus Schmalhausen.

PRESCOTT

I thought the sweater was for Charlie?

PHILOMENA

I've changed my mind again. It's for me. This is Gus Schmalhausen's favorite color.

PRESCOTT

You said you hated him.

PHILOMENA

I'm engaged to him.

PRESCOTT

That's not true.

PHILOMENA

It will be after to-morrow evening. I'm in deadly earnest.

PRESCOTT

Do you dare to tell me you care about him?

PHILOMENA

(*Suddenly turning and looking PRESCOTT squarely in the face.*) No.

PRESCOTT

(*Confused.*) You mean yes.

PHILOMENA

No, I hate him. Let go my hands!

(*Thus recalled to her hands, he grasps her more determinedly. She struggles in a way that brings them into wrestlers' relationship.*)

PRESCOTT

(*Aflame with the uncertain contact.*) Phil—Phil—is there someone else?

PHILOMENA

(*Faintly.*) Let me free.

PRESCOTT

Phil, don't try to hide the truth from me. Be frank—tell me.

PHILOMENA

There's no one.

PRESCOTT

(*Releases her suddenly. Stands. Wipes his forehead with his handkerchief.*) I'm—I'm glad of that.

(*He realizes that he looks foolish but overcomes self-consciousness as a man who escapes from a fire in pajamas accepts the fact without shame.*)

PHILOMENA

(*With great scorn.*) You thought I was trying to get you!

PRESCOTT

(*Defensively.*) You were.

PHILOMENA

(*Laughs contemptuously.*) Yes? Let me tell you what I was doing. I listened to your big talk to my brother and decided to turn it all against you. You hardly recognized a single one of the pitfalls you were so sure of. Oh, I could have got you, had I wanted to.

PRESCOTT

(*Generous with relief.*) I dare say.

PHILOMENA

(*With a large, pitying smile that irritates him enormously.*) But I didn't want you. If I had loved you—how easy it would have been!

PRESCOTT

(*With studied courtesy that gives her the lie direct.*) Very. I suppose to-morrow evening with Mr. Schmalhausen—

PHILOMENA

(*Laughing with childish delight.*) You believed that incredible myth!

PRESCOTT

(*Sits disconsolately.*) I see. He was part of it, too.

PHILOMENA

(*Contritely.*) It was a bit mean of me, I suppose, but then you said some hard things about my sex and I had to get even. (*Archly.*) Admit you needed a lesson.

PRESCOTT

(*Smiling.*) You've not helped your sex much. I'll add this as a most enlightening and valuable bit to my experience.

PHILOMENA

(*Rising and coming toward him genially.*) Then there's no hard feeling?

PRESCOTT

(*Looking up at her.*) Not a bit.

PHILOMENA

(*Holding out her hand.*) Shake.

PRESCOTT

(*Taking her hand.*) Phil, you're an extraordinary girl.

(*For a moment they remain staring at each other, smiling with an amicability that begins to become tender.*)

PHILOMENA

(*Her voice flute-like with womanliness.*) Press, you're a dear.

(*With her free hand she lightly touches his hair. He seizes her hand and lays it against his cheek. There is another short pause, then PHILOMENA makes as though to draw away. He detains her.*)

PRESCOTT

(*Rather brokenly.*) Phil—

PHILOMENA

(*In deep contralto.*) Press—

PRESCOTT

(*He draws her closer.*) I wish—

(*But at this point the telephone breaks ruthlessly in and takes the center of the stage. They separate as though they had been interrupted by a living presence. PRESCOTT rises. On his face are registered in rapid succession, disappoint-*

*ment, fright and reprieve. PHILOMENA moves away toward her chair with the lack of expression that is seen on the doggedly patient.*)

PRESCOTT

(*Motioning toward the phone.*) Shall I answer it?

PHILOMENA

(*Politely.*) Please. If it is for Mother or Father, they are out—to a movie.

PRESCOTT

(*At the phone.*) Hello. . . Hello? . . . Who? . . . They're out—to a movie. Yes. She's right here. Want to speak. Yes, this is Prescott. . . Oh, Charlie. . . Your voice sounds. . . What? . . . WHAT! . . . You damned young fool. . . I? . . . What do you mean I'm to blame? . . . Rats! . . . You're a fool! . . . Sure it feels good to-night, but wait till to-morrow morning! You're in for a hangover that'll beat anything you've ever known. . . I do know something about it! All right, here's Phil. (*To her.*) He wants to speak to you.

PHILOMENA

(*Nervously clinging to the table.*) What's the matter. Don't keep anything from me? What has he done? He's drunk—I've gathered that much. Is—(*hysterically.*) Has he been arrested?

PRESCOTT

(*Ruthlessly.*) All that and more. He's engaged.

PHILOMENA

(*Hollowly.*) Engaged!

PRESCOTT

(*Turning the screw.*) To Rosalie. He wants your congratulations.

PHILOMENA

(*She sways and trembles, making no attempt to go to the phone.*) Oh—Oh—!

PRESCOTT

(*Drops the transmitter and rushes to*

*her support.)* Phil—Phil! (*She does not faint. She bursts into tempestuous sobs on his shoulder.*) Phil,—dear girl—hush, hush, you mustn't!

PHILOMENA

(*Incoherently.*) My little brother! My baby brother! Oh I'm so old—I'm useless now. I've lost him. I've no one!

PRESCOTT

(*Desperately.*) Phil, Phil, this is unworthy!

PHILOMENA

(*Growing more violent.*) Why did I grow up? What good am I? No one needs me! I'm so lonesome. I wish I were dead!

PRESCOTT

Phil, that's wicked! You've no right to say you're old. And we all need you. Phil, you don't know what you've been to me—

PHILOMENA

(*Wildly.*) I do know I've never been engaged to you!

PRESCOTT

(*Suddenly aware she is in his arms,*

*helpless and full of need.*) Oh, Phil—I wish you were!

PHILOMENA

(*Pushing away from him.*) Don't. You don't mean that! It's just second nature to say it!

PRESCOTT

(*Her attempt to free herself fills him with conviction.*) No, no. I do care. I want you. I love you!

PHILOMENA

(*Awed and breathless.*) What are you saying, Press?

PRESCOTT

(*Ardently.*) Look at me Phil. (*They look. They kiss.*)

PHILOMENA

Press!

PRESCOTT

(*Now completely anaesthetized.*) Oh, my own darling—what a fool I've been!

(*The phone can be heard to mutter hoarse imprecations as they again assume the attitude so necessary to the final.*

(CURTAIN)



## The Singer

By Helen Woljeska

I AM the singer. I sing to you of the rapture of love—because my lover has gone from me. And because I never knew happiness, I sing of all its joys. I sing of youth, because age is beginning to turn the gold of my hair into ashes. And because I have known many tears, I am singing to you of laughter. Ah! if love and happiness, youth and laughter were mine—I would not be singing to you.





# The High Priest

*By John E. Rosser*

FROM childhood he had been set apart for the priesthood. Born unblemished of body, and endowed with mentality of conspicuously high order, he had grown in the nurture and admonition of the Great Teachers. All that they knew had been imparted to him. Daily, so long as sunlight lasted, and often far into the night, by flaming tapers, he read from the Sacred Books what wisdom had come to all antecedent priests through the centuries. Not yet having attained his majority he had already imbibed all the Truth ever possessed by those of his blood and creed.

But, since he was ordained to be the greatest of all priests, he was sent to the foremost seat of learning among a powerful people of fairer skin. There, again through the hours of sunlight and often till the morning star appeared, he crowded the days of four years with study of all the philosophies and creeds that ever had flourished.

Came the day when, in solemn ceremony, the neophyte, reputed now the wisest of all men, was to be clothed in the garb of the High Priesthood, to be chief among the Sons of Light. That day he was to tell the people all that may be known of Life and Death and

Destiny. Along all the streets vast throngs pressed in reverential silence toward the spacious temple, into which not a hundredth part of the crowd might pass. Gongs boomed, and the air was fragrant with incense.

At last the mystic rites of ordination were done. The chanting of the lesser princes of that faith died away; the hushed worshippers looked up from their kneeling, to behold the new Highest of High Priests. He stood before them an impressive figure; shining out from his face was the incomparable light of youth, and upon it rays that had penetrated a translucent window at his side. Now he was to speak; now he was to reveal the ultimate of Life and Death and Destiny.

Standing forward from the altar upon which sat the horrific image of the Unnamable One, he looked out over upturned faces, encountering everywhere inquiring, begging eyes and gaping mouths. He outstretched his arm, as if in gesture that precedes speech. Then he seemed striving violently to suppress a cough. . . .

The temple walls, ancient a thousand years ago, echoed, for the first time in their venerable history, with laughter, boisterous and uncontrolled.



# May Fifth, 1921

*By Albert Edmund Trombly*

LIFE is a splendid adventure  
And the earth likes to be tramped by seven-league boots.

Lodi, Arcola, Rivoli, Marengo, Austerlitz, Jena, Friedland, Wagram, Dresden, Montmirail—  
The imagination staggers in his wake . . .

I like the ring of his proclamations  
Rolling from the Alps to the Apennines:  
"Soldiers of the army of Italy . . ."  
The emaciated hands grasp their muskets  
And the bare feet tramp over mountains.  
"From the height of the Pyramids forty centuries look down upon you,"  
And the Sphinx starts in his sleep.

Rise from the dead, Machiavelli, and salute your Prince.  
"Nor is my blood ditch-water!" he cries  
And lops off a Bourbon scion.  
He takes up Europe in his hand  
And says, "here," to Joseph, giving him Spain.  
"And here is Holland for Louis and Naples for Caroline  
And for Jerome Westphalia."

I like to think of him at Lodi coming face to face with his genius,  
Or rubbing his hands at Austerlitz as the Austrians march into his trap,  
Or calmly ordering that a pass be stormed which his generals report  
impregnable.

"Ave Caesar!" shout the surviving lancers as he rides past.  
I like to think of him striking "impossible" from the dictionary.  
And bantering Soult for having been beaten in Spain by Wellington.  
I like him making love awkwardly to the blasé coquette Josephine,  
Wiping his pen on his white cashmere trousers and poking the embers with  
his boot,  
Kicking in the stomach the valet who is slow in helping him on with his boots,  
Taking the crown from the hands of the Pope and crowning himself  
While the old noblesse look on, wanting to smile but not daring.  
I like to picture his suite dusty, panting, straggling a furlong behind him as  
he gallops from Paris to Madrid.  
I like him brutal and booted and spurred,  
Marrying the Austrian Archduchess in the coach as it hurries on to Paris.

*(Continued over)*

At St. Helena he thinks: "If Murat had been at Waterloo . . .  
 Spain was the thorn in my side, and the Austrian marriage  
 An abyss covered over with flowers."  
 Sun and rain beat upon him, sun and rain and his memories,  
 Booming and groaning guns and the shriek of victorious eagles,  
 Sun and rain and his memories and he lays himself on his death-bed,  
 Again the shriek of his eagles and he mutters . . . "tête d'armée . . ."

Life the splendid adventure . . .  
 And seven-league boots.



## The Lotus Eater

By Ruth MacMillan

MY neighbour lies all day amid the heaped up rose pillows of her *chaise longue*. Walking long ago became prohibitive. She is hugely, mountainously fat. Three chins form a fleshly façade below a vacant baby face. Golden bracelets are well-nigh lost in the folds of her wrists. All semblance of human form has vanished long since. Fat ankles bulge above heelless slippers, her only footwear. She lies there all day and dreams. . . . And none may know that

in that pleasant somnolence she weaves gracious fantasies in which she, slender, vibrant, regal, is ever the central figure. Hers is "the face that launched a thousand ships." She is at once Semiramis, the young Heloise, Iseult the Golden, and the red-ringletted siren of old Egypt. For her favour, daily, knights of all Romance break lance in ceaseless joust. . . . My neighbour lies all day amid the heaped up rose pillows of her *chaise longue*.



THE trouble with the matrimonial door is that it has a latchstring when you want to get in and a Yale lock when you try to get out.



VISTA: In the country, an opening in the landscape through which one can see a bill-board.



# The Snob

By Agnes Boulton

## I

I NEVER understood him—not at first, when he came to the office aloof and bored to occupy with dignity the position of bookkeeper; nor during the period of our painful, vague intimacy; and even now, with all the facts arranged in my mind, his death seems incredible to me—that splendid death in the early light of the sun. . . .

He was pale and thin, with a slight stoop; hardly more than twenty-eight years old. His eyes conveyed a remote gaze; they looked over and around people, as though, unable to reach the real meaning of things, he despised the persistent and obvious surfaces. His lean, taut face with a fine forehead showed (there was no doubt of it) breeding—English breeding of a sort, a trifle rigid and incapable of enthusiasm. So that he had a background, as it were, for his haughty and detached air. And then his name—Clive Auchincloss.

But he had so little else for a background that the clerks in the office called him a silly snob. They resented him. His conscious, silent superiority over them was so much the real thing that they were forced in self-defence to dig out the small mean details of his daily life. They needed weapons to bring him down; he must be punished for being different from themselves—for having such a silly name!

His cheap boarding house pleased our clerks immensely. What a place for a swell like him to stay! They soon rooted out that he could have no pretensions over them. With the true intuition of small minds they declared that he had no friends. Judge a man by his

friends. You didn't see him hobnobbing with any of the classy guys he imitated, did you? Who'd bother with him, for all his airs and his grand name, they'd like to know? The stuck-up snob!

Perhaps he was. What, exactly, does the term mean? "*Snob: one who makes birth or wealth the sole criterion of worth . . . cringing to superiors; overbearing to inferiors.*"

Hardly, then, in our dictionary sense. He was neither cringing nor overbearing. He just couldn't bear the idea of contact with people—people, at least, like those in the office. Office boy and manager—he scorned us all, I am sure, though he tried not to show it too obviously. He scorned his work, though he did it well; he scorned the city, the streets at five o'clock, the workers . . . But he was never overbearing—just detached. He didn't want to have anything at all to do with us.

In one sense the word may have applied. "*One who makes birth . . . the sole criterion of worth.*" He never spoke of it, so how did we, every one of us there in the office, know that to him birth, a sense of race one might say, was the supreme thing? Afterward when we became friends, he did refer to his family—to his ancestors, I should say—but always in a curious, inverted way.

For six months he had ignored me as completely as the rest of them. His tardy friendship was based, I was ashamed to admit, on his discovery, to his surprise, no doubt, that I was a graduate of Trinity College, Dublin—and something about a relative of mine who happened to be of importance in India.



I felt at the time that it was snobbish—rottenly so! He was very obvious about it—even mentioned it, I think. I remember that when he startled me by the blunt removal of his haughty reserve I felt a sudden chilliness toward him; for the first time I agreed with the office force that he was—well, just too much!

Then, as he stood there by my desk, I saw the truth of it, and I was able to slide my coolness into merely the manner of being very much surprised and turn it all into a pleasant friendliness. I saw that behind his imperturbable façade of superiority there was something pathetically uncertain.

It was nothing tangible. His words were as they should be. His manner was perfect, in keeping with the façade. Yet I spent the next ten minutes with the painful feeling that I must put him at his ease. Perhaps I had already discovered that I was going to like him immensely. I have spoken of our friendship as being vague and painful. It struck that note then—at its very inception.

It is hard to describe our friendship; and looking back on it now, I wonder if it should be called a friendship. A few times at the theater together, an occasional dropping in at my rooms—he always withdrew at any idea of my going to see him—that was all it amounted to. But perhaps my being his only acquaintance made it worthy of that name. I soon discovered that he knew no one else. So far as he ever went with anyone, he went with me. Lonely and misunderstood, he existed in the stupid way of the life he hated, aware of neither love nor pleasure, without a confidant, without hope. If I could go back now—or could have known then, and let him talk to me! It seems to me it would have meant so much to him to have someone who knew, and understood. At the same time—strange paradox!—he could not have borne it to have anyone know. He would have gone away.

He liked to hear me talk. He would watch me silently, with an odd still-

ness; sometimes, for no reason that I could see, he would abruptly change the subject, speak nervously of something else, or even—he did it twice!—get up and go. He seemed perpetually on his defense against something. I could never discover what.

There was some mystery. It hung about him unsolved, in his weary and cynical expression, his odd manners, his surprising silences.

I did not know where he had been born, his native land, where he had lived, or why he was now keeping books at forty dollars a week. If our conversation turned to anything personal, he would shut up like a clam, and that uneasy and paralyzing silence would fall between us. Our conversation was limited—very! He read a great deal—he told me he spent his evenings reading—but he refused to talk even about the books he had read. It was as if he were afraid of making some mistake. And if England was mentioned, or indeed, Europe, or European institutions—then he was at his worst. His hard silence would become almost rude.

What did it all mean? I could never guess. A life that he had left behind him, of which he would not be reminded? *That* meant what? Had he disgraced himself? A love affair? The latter seemed to me curiously improbable. Woman—the sex—seemed to enter not at all into his life. The fact was, I couldn't imagine him preoccupied with any human relationship. He seemed lost in something beyond that, an idea, a belief, a ghost that haunted him—what?

Something at least, that made him hate humanity. I couldn't, even then, believe that it was "pride of race" only that made him so fixed about it. The one subject on which he was really articulate was his hatred of the crowd. He loathed it, and his whole manner was the result of a grim determination on his part not to notice it, not to allow it, if possible, to enter his consciousness. It amounted to an obsession with him—I almost said a religion. He used expressions from Nietzsche, whom I

discovered he read a great deal—"the herd," "slave-morality," etc.

Once, I remember, I asked him point-blank if he was one of the Sunderland Auchinclosses whose Sir Clive, some hundred years back, had distinguished himself in India. (His strange voice had always perplexed me—not American, and decidedly not English.) That was the only time I ever got a direct answer from him. It was almost too direct and emphatic an affirmative. He was. And when, in that short, heavy manner he had got his answer out, he turned away from me, and actually grew pale with some violent and suppressed agitation.

## II

It was characteristic of him that he should mention nothing about it beforehand, and then appear at my desk and say: "I'll be up at your place tonight, if you're not going out"; and after a slight pause, "I'm leaving here tomorrow for good. In fact, I'm sailing."

He went back to his tall seat with the same abruptness.

Sailing! I stared across at him perplexed. The light reflected on his smooth head, bent over long rows of figures. His back, narrow and a little bent, was exactly as it had been day after day, when my absent gaze had fallen upon it. Sailing. I knew now that for all his strangeness I had never expected him to do anything more exciting than to sit forever with his back toward me in that tall chair.

Sailing for England, of course. Back to his ancestors. And for the first time, under the surprise of the news that he was going back, I got a clue to my own feeling about him; that, definitely, I knew he didn't belong back there. Something was different. Something kept him apart. It would never do for him to go. It was the only place it had ever occurred to me he might go to, and at the same time the one place he mustn't. And a peculiarly helpless feeling came over me at the very idea of his attempting it. By the time he

arrived that evening I had got to the point of wanting to tell him that he *mustn't* go—that it was all foolishness.

He came in at nine. It had been storming outside; he had left his wet hat and coat down in the hall; but his face was still freshened and wet from the rain. He appeared different. Was it the storm or had the taut shallowness gone? He was younger; he almost glowed. I felt a certain excitement, caught from his manner.

"You have the look of one going adventuring!" I said, and nodded to a chair. "Sit down."

He moved across the room. "Well, of course—it will be new—different," he said nonchalantly. "D'you know the place—Vereguay?"

"Oh—not England?" In my amazement I wondered why I had been so sure that it would be England. "I'd imagined—"

He had flushed a sluggish red.

"You thought—?" he said, and broke off.

Then he added—and I got the impression that it made him very nervous to say it, that it increased his pulse, and that he needed self-control to bring it out naturally:

"No. I'm quite through with all that."

There was a silence in which I felt keenly that he suffered. "Vereguay? Spanish, eh? South America? My dear boy, what a corking idea!"

He had pulled himself together. I noticed that his old calm, bored face had returned. So it was only the freshness of the rain! I looked at him attentively, for information.

"It's a very small and obscure republic—industry, silver mining," he said. "West of the Andes. One important city—Porto Magdalena. The rest—mines, and native villages—some few ranches."

"And you are going there?" I couldn't imagine it. "You think you'll—"

"I'm going there because I can't stand this any longer." He made a gesture that meant the city, all its people and

all its ways. "This sordid, grubbing existence! The frightful mediocrity of it! I must get away or perish."

He was silent.

I felt that he was about to say, "I can never come back." But he went on: "Vereguay is farther than any place I know of because it is so difficult to reach. It has little trade. . . ."

I asked him what he would do there.

"Look around—there'll be something," he said.

I felt that he was purposely vague. Would there be bookkeeping—or what else could he do?

"I haven't much idea of the place, in fact," he continued. "But at least I can—I will not be—"

He looked at me as though, without saying any more, he wished me to understand. I didn't. He saw that. But his eyes remained on my face as if he were going to speak.

A little, sharp excitement touched me. He was about to tell me his secret.

I had never noticed before how sensitive, how quivering almost, his face was beneath his nonchalant mask. I got, in that moment, the impression of a person haunted by something . . . visions, memories, what?

"I have never known," he cried in a strangely passionate voice, "never, never—" And that was all.

He looked at me dumbly, pleading for understanding.

"Never what?" I said gently.

His eyes were quite dreadful for a moment—pitiful. I knew. He wanted me to understand. He wanted someone to understand, to feel with him all his torture over that secret that he could not betray. I knew then that he would never tell me. But his attempt to let me share his struggle without telling me was really violent.

"You read . . .," he said, "and in the theater. . . . But life itself is more . . . more. . . . And no one suspects. No one."

"More . . . tragic?"

He looked at me, and I saw that for the moment he had been lost.

"Tragic?" he repeated.

The meaning of the word, coming to him, seemed to put him on his guard. I have said that he was very proud.

"No," he said hurriedly.

He got up and went to the window, looking down into the street below, and I, having seen that lighted street so often, knew that he saw the dingy, lighted elevated station on the corner, the drab people hurrying along, the cheap restaurant opposite, an expanse of illumined glass and white paint.

"I do not belong here," he said.

I felt that he followed with his eyes some small couple below.

"They go along, empty, envious, sordid . . . to have enough money to live better than your neighbor—with that for their ideal! Human beings who judge one another by how much their clothes cost!"

He had no pity for them, only contempt.

"And to have to live, always, in contact with these people, as I do, until you begin to doubt that there are any others. . . ."

He stopped, as if his own words had frightened him, and turning from the window moved to the far end of the room.

When he turned back I saw that his face had flushed.

"Of course, living as I do, it is my fault. I am amongst them, I don't go anywhere. . . ." It seemed as if with his incoherent words he was answering some accusation.

"But will you find people different anywhere?" I asked.

He stared at me.

"Why—of course!" he stammered. He meant—*his* sort of people! At that moment his mystery for me deepened.

He went on, nervously lighting a cigarette:

"That's why I am going away. Things seem worse to me all the time. You pick up a newspaper—strikes, more strikes. It is the age of the proletariat, the mob! And after all"—he threw away his cigarette and grasped in both long, aristocratic hands the back of a

chair; and when he continued I got the impression that he was quoting:

*"It cannot be effaced from a man's soul what his ancestors have preferably and most constantly done!"*

His face glowed; I thought of his look as he had entered; an absurd idea almost brought a smile to my lips; was he marching along through the rain, head up, to that refrain?

It was the only time that I ever saw him show anything like fire.

"I can do nothing," he went on rather sadly. "Not here . . . not now. I used to dream that—" He broke off abruptly. "To keep one's head up against the overwhelming tide of the mob—that is all that is left. To ignore, always, what one disdains . . ."

He sat down, with an air of wishing to put from us all that he had said.

"By the way, may I give you my books?" he asked rather awkwardly. "I've no one else to . . . and I can't take them. The express will bring them in the morning. You don't mind?"

He added, "I leave tomorrow."

I never saw him again. The books came the next day; to my surprise, some hundred and fifty or so, all with his name, Clive Vavaseur Auchincloss, written neatly on the front page. They were a well worn lot, and looked as though they had been picked up at second-hand shops. Old classics, mostly: several biographies of great men, and a number of books on law, with notes in his same neat hand; plainly he had been going to study law. What else? Chesterfield's letters to his son, Jane Austen, some James, and a complete set of Nietzsche. I had to have shelves put up for them; somehow I felt that he would be back some day, and I wanted him to see them there.

Some two months after he had gone I received a letter. He liked Vereguay; had found nothing to do yet, but was looking around. He spoke of the country, mountainous and wild and very beautiful—of tropic beauty. The

old Spanish architecture and the tinted houses pleased him.

"I have met an old Spaniard," he finished, "a descendant of one of the old conquering grandees. I like him, and he wants me to go inland with him next fall with the idea of my taking charge of a rancho he owns. But that is long in the future. Meanwhile—?"

Meanwhile?

Three months later the name of the little Republic caught my eye in a newspaper. I turned back to read: "*American is Hero of Vereguay Revolution.*"

I smiled, thinking of Clive leaving our civilization, only to find himself in the worst phase of the very thing he despised. He'd probably left the country at the first rumour of mob-rising! Then I stiffened:

*"The final overthrow of the government was accomplished last week, when the mine-workers and peons, in a battle lasting three days, took the city of Porto Magdalena. Clive Auchincloss, an American, is hailed as a national hero by the people, who have long been oppressed under the old régime. He is believed to have been killed."*

### III

It was true. He had been killed. For a long time, pondering over that short notice, it seemed, all of it, incredible, an absurd mistake, one of the irritating errors of the press. He dead, a hero of some obscure revolution? The mystery that hung about him deepened. It was no longer the mystery of his past; of some deed done or undone. Going beyond that it became the mystery of a human soul. I discovered, to my surprise, and somewhat to my discomfort, that I was hoping it *was* true. That I would have felt life again commonplace if it hadn't been true. But if true, why? I went up to the Library and looked up Vereguay.

But there was nothing very interesting about Vereguay. A long list of revolutions terminating in new govern-



ments, and quarrels over the silver mines. A hot, stupid country, no doubt. Why had he gone there? And what had happened that he, *he*, had died for the people? Some mistake, I kept telling myself. I would get a letter from him some day explaining it all.

Then one morning a letter did come, bearing that country's stamp. It was not in his handwriting. I tore it open.

Seeing the carefully penciled and dirty lines, a sense, as it were, of adventure and excitement seized me; and sitting there before my desk, our busy room, noisy with typewriters, faded, and I was for a moment in some strange world. He had gone into that world, and it had killed him.

The letter said:

*"Your name and address was the only one we could find in Mr. Auchincloss' things. There was a note said to inform you in case of accident. We are sending you his trunk trust you will info. relatives. Will send notices later. y'rs truly Jas. Small."*

There was a smudgy postscript:

*"Statue going up to Auchincloss in Plaza, will send photos if relatives want."*

If relatives want—! I sat down and wrote the distant Mr. Small to send me clippings and photographs.

So they had put up a statue to him! I waited daily for the details. A month passed. They did not come—they never came, in fact.

Early in October I returned to my room to find a dilapidated trunk occupying the center of the room. It had come all the way from Veraguay. Of course there was no key.

That trunk became a problem. What could I do with it? Even in an obscure corner its presence seemed to fill my room with the mystery of the man who had given up his life. Even while I read, the book would blur, my eyes go almost against my will to that dingy, imperturbable old relic. What would *he*

have wanted me to do with it? Open it—read, perhaps, the secret of his past?

And then in my curious mind would rise up pictures of relatives, perhaps unhappy, waiting relatives, who after all had rights, though he had denied them. I might find a clue in that trunk, and let them know. He had died a hero. They were going to put up a statue to him. It seemed to me that that statue would be a fine consolation to them for all he had done—or left undone. He would want them to know about that!

The next day I left orders with a locksmith. When I returned the trunk lid lifted to my touch. I delayed opening it until after dinner. The whole evening should be devoted to this.

What did I find? Everything just tossed in. It was an awful mess. The disorder of it suggested chaos and terror. There was no tray. Shirts, soiled and clean, bundled together; old shoes; muddied gaiters. I dropped them into a pile on the floor, shaking them as though something revealing might drop out. Then a pair of binoculars—an old-fashioned, expensive pair, inlaid with mother-of-pearl—and a flask of the same period.

Near the bottom of the trunk were six or eight books thrown in carelessly. I turned over the brittle, faded pages. Aristotle—in the original. And on the title page, written in a fine hand, *Clive Cecil Auchincloss, Merton, Oxford, 1869*. His father? Then a well-worn copy of Suetonius—also in the original. Evidently the old gentleman had been a scholar. But why had Clive carried these books with him, even to Veraguay? Turning the last-named book over in my hand, I happened to glance inside the back cover; in a childish hand was written carefully *Clive Auchincloss, September 9th, Hokeville, New Jersey*. In all the others—Plato, Xenophon—was this same inscription. Hokeville, New Jersey? I turned over, with uneasy wonder, the remaining things in the trunk.

Among some papers—which seemed to be an attempt at a story—I found the photograph of a Major in the Brit-



ish army. On the back was written the same name that was in the classics. There was no doubt of this being his father; the high nose, the same eyes; but a totally different expression, a look that puzzled me, that seemed to spread out from his sensual mouth and become a secretive mask. He *would* enjoy Suetonius, this old boy!

That was all. For a long time I pondered in my chair, the photograph on my knees, the trunk open beside me. And I began wondering about Hokeville—why his name, and the name of an obscure New Jersey town, should be inscribed, with a date of twenty years back, in his father's books. He must have been eight or nine years old then. Could he have people there? What sort of place was it? . . . What happened was that I went down there the next week, having obtained a leave of a few days from the office. And all the way down on the train I had that inner nervous tremour that comes before some expected event.

#### IV

HOKEVILLE intrigued me by its very lack of all possible interest. The long, wide, dusty street, lined with faded shops and shaded by dingy trees which shed, one by one, their parched and colourless leaves—it was even worse than I had expected.

I could not bring myself to register in the only hotel. Time enough for that later. I left my suitcase at the station in charge of the weary telegrapher, and wandered up the main street. Funny, how little one's careful plans sometimes matter? I had intended very cautiously, and only after looking around, to put out my feelers about Clive. But I found myself at the post-office window asking the leisurely clerk:

"Do you know anyone hereabout by the name of Auchincloss?"

No, he said quite politely, he didn't; but when I began earnestly: "A few years back—" he dismissed me with a bored and curt "No one of that name here."

I went with irritation out into the street. Of course not! I was a fool! I found myself walking along that dreary street, away from the station—away, I suppose, because if I went back I'd have to decide about that bag.

I couldn't make up my mind what I wanted to do. Clive Auchincloss and this flat, commonplace town were boiling together in my mind. What had they in common? I could not guess. And yet—ah, yes, they had! I felt it, but I could not reach it with my mind. The street, growing narrower and sandier now, seemed to whisper to me some significant secret . . .

The houses straggled less closely along the road, which now turned westward. The mediocrity of the place was losing itself in the small, barren fields between the houses, in a more discarded, less commercial air. I was coming in now on the old, original town from which all the families of energy had moved away, a settlement of pines and sand.

A little farther on I found one of those old, brown country stores. Over a dusty glass case of penny candies I asked the ancient storekeeper for cigarettes. He fumbled around for a long time in another case, eyeing me meanwhile, and when, while paying him, I casually asked: "Do you remember ever hearing the name of Auchincloss hereabout?" he paused, still holding my package of cigarettes, and let the question, which apparently startled him, sink into his old bones.

I saw at once that he knew something.

"Auchincloss?" I repeated.

His gaze turned to shrewdness.

"Why, y-yes," he quavered. "Be you th' lawyer?"

There was a greedy, malignant pleasure in his question. In spite of what his remark did to me I managed to keep quite casual.

"I just wanted to know," I said ingratiatingly. "You know everything that goes on hereabout, I suppose?"

I saw at once that I had made a fatal mistake.

He glared at me and shut his lipless mouth together.

"You better go up t' Liz Tate's for your information!" he growled, and turned back to a deliberate fumbling.

I went out of the store, holding firmly in my startled mind that name, Liz Tate. Strange ideas, melodramatic—ah, the human mind is melodramatic at the slightest excuse!—lurid, exciting, possessed me. I said almost aloud: "Well, it ~~was~~ worth coming!" And looking back I saw that the old man had followed me out of the store and was staring after me . . .

Two youths in the yard of a small house across the road were my objective. "Can you tell me where Liz Tate lives?" As I went on toward the more desolate part of the settlement I reflected on their snickering, malicious attitude. Just because I was a stranger—someone different from themselves. And I found myself somehow thinking of Clive in connection with them—those hard, insulting little morons, the backwash of early settlers.

The road had become sandy between disconsolate pines, dreary clearings and hopeless-looking houses. The thin, late afternoon spread along the ground and through the trees, and in the air was the sad and delightful odour of autumn. *The second turning to the right . . . for Liz Tate's.*

My eyes was suddenly caught by the overgrown ruins of what had once evidently been a large building. It was back from the road; the vestiges of a sweeping driveway could still be seen, edged by an aimless growth of shrubs and small trees. The cellars still remained—huge cellars.

I paused. An odd sight in this Jersey wilderness! I was aware of a curious tightening of the skin, and I knew that somehow this building in ruins, perhaps destroyed by fire, had connected itself in my mind with Clive. I was entirely at sea by this time. I went on toward the second turning to the right, to the home of Liz Tate.

The house was back off the road in a bare, sandy yard. The shades were

down. Standing on the little front porch—there were old tomato cans, dozens of them, filled with earth, piled there—I could see beyond some sunlit pines the whole shining expanse of the sky; and as I rapped on the flaking paint of the door a sudden, tremendous sense of the insignificance of human lives and human hopes caught me. At that moment the door pulled back jerkily, and I faced an untidy middle-aged woman, who cautiously held to the doorhandle, so that I saw only part of her.

"Did y' knock?" she asked suspiciously.

I felt that unless I immediately placated her the door would be shut in my face.

"How d'you do?" I said impressively and very pleasantly. "I came to see a—Mrs. Tate."

"If you're the new insurance man—I" she began pugnaciously, closing the door a little.

"Oh, no, I'm not, certainly!" I told her hurriedly. "They sent me up here from the store—about someone"—I felt that the mention of the name would now be the only thing—"Auchincloss . . ."

There was a moment of stillness.

Then: "Oh!" she said in a suddenly breathless voice.

She opened the door a bit more and looked at me; I saw that her flabby, colourless face was oddly agitated. She was stout and formless and very dirty.

"I just wanted to inquire," I went on. "It's important. Could you spare me a few minutes?"

"Well, y' better come in," she replied grudgingly.

I saw that in spite of her agitation she was not going to change her attitude, that her breathlessness was of the moment only.

"You better wait here a moment," she ordered after I had stepped inside, and as she spoke she closed two doors leading into other rooms into which she evidently did not wish me to see. Then she disappeared in the rear, leaving me in a small entry.

I was dismayed at the bad odour in

the house, and at suddenly being shut up in this small space. Through the walls I could hear lowered voices speaking hurriedly, and chairs being moved about. Then the woman reappeared and beckoned to me.

The kitchen into which I stepped seemed light after the dimness of the entry. It was a large room, sloppy and dirty like the woman, but showing signs of having been hurriedly straightened up. On the greasy stove in the corner stood unwashed pots and kettles; and there were more unwashed dishes piled beneath the sink. The curtains hung ragged and gray with dirt; and on the littered window ledge one spindly geranium perished for lack of water.

"Sit down," said the woman, still faintly aggressive, pointing to a chair. But she was trying to be more pleasant to me. In the clearer light of the kitchen she stood revealed, a heavy, inert mass of flesh beneath uncommonly dirty clothes. And yet—she might once have been pretty. It was the expression of her face that sickened me—the fixed stare of avaricious greediness with which she watched me. It was as though through all her stodgy years she had cherished some hope of deliverance from this life of hers—some hope that had died a thousand deaths and that now sprang to life renewed.

I felt a little mad. What had all this to do with Clive? Why was I here? Then her words threw me into a sort of panic.

"You looking for Clive? He's gone to th' city. He'll be back."

She eyed me with a slight return of her aggressiveness and repeated:

"He'll be back before long."

I couldn't bear her greedy eyes and looked down, only to see the lines of dirt in the fat creasings of her throat. I wasn't surprised at her next words—it was as if I knew already. "I'm his mother. I suppose you know that?"

In the slight pause that followed I did look back at her face. Something in my gaze disconcerted her. She assumed a virtuous and slightly defiant air—by tightening her lips and drawing

together somehow her loose sloppiness. She saw that I was taken aback.

"I thought that ol' Bird 'ad told you down to th' store."

I shook my head weakly.

"It was a long time ago!" she said defiantly. "Thirty years nearly!"

"Yes, of course!" I stammered.

She went on without heeding me, with the manner of wishing to get this part of the affair over with and down to more important things: "I was only a young, innercent thing."

How she must have lingered, during those dingy years, over that word—innocent!

"Innercent!" she repeated.

She was watching me.

"After he died I read them letters he used to keep from me so careful—th' letters from his folks back in England. . . . I wisht I read 'em while he was alive! Him tellin' me day and night that I was th' reason of his not bein' able to go back to his family!"

She paused, scratching at the hair behind her ear. "He'd been kicked out o' th' English Army out in India, that was what was th' matter with him. An' all along o' livin' with a nigger woman out there. . . ."

An expression, absent and peculiar, lay for a moment on her face. "He was low, that's what—he liked to be low." And in the movement of her head as she threw off her unpleasant memories, I thought I saw something of Clive.

He was their son; but the tragedy was that he was not *their* son; in him had lived again the best of his father's race—uselessly.

"How old was Clive when his father died?" I asked.

"Four," she said sharply.

Then her mind leaped greedily ahead.

"I oughta got something from his family a long time before this!" she said with anger.

It was as though her torpid life stared her in the face.

"You might say as it's almost too late now!" she added bitterly. "When Clive was eight years old and begun needin'

things I wrote 'em a letter—an' I made Clivie write 'em a p.s. He was always bright. He could read an' write then . . . an' he was wonderful at figgers. But no answer come." Her face darkened.

"I usta send Clivie down to th' post-office every mail—expectin'! I oughter got something long before this—" she repeated—"takin' th' Major in and nursing him when he was sick, an' then havin' to bring up his brat!"

Just then the outer door opened, and a man, an uncouth, witless-looking creature with a leering grin, stepped into the kitchen. She paid no attention to him; he edged between the stove and the wall and stood listening and grinning.

"Clivie was an awful hard young one to bring up," she went on. "O' course th' other kids hollered after him—how was I to stop it? But he got so as I couldn't beat him into goin' to school—or down to th' store even. . . . Then he'd go sneakin' up to th' attic where his father's old trunk was, full of books and such, and never be round when I wanted him."

She paused. Even now she looked back on that son of hers with suspicion and dislike. "Then he run away—when he was fifteen. Said he'd never come back, an' took most all of his father's things with him." She suddenly felt that she had gone too far. "But he'll be back soon—any day. I'm expectin' him."

"Is he th' lawyer, Liz?" croaked the man behind the stove.

She turned on him.

"Shet your trap!" she said fiercely, and he subsided.

She looked at me again. "So you see how things has been?"

"But I ought to tell you," I said, rising nervously, "that I am not the lawyer."

She got up also, angry consternation mottling her face with red.

"You're a friend of the family's then?" she shrilled.

I tried to explain. But she knew that it was useless—that I had nothing

to do with the money she had been hoping for for so long—that her dreams must this time die the death.

"You ain't? Well, what are you doin' here, poking into my business? Some rotten summer visitor from Hokeville, ain't you, heard about the Major an' tryin' to see what you kin find out . . .! Who sent you up here? Old Bird, eh? I'll fix him. He's just been sued for slander, and he'll be sued again. . . . But I've dealt with your sort before!"

The rest is too ignominious. I was chased! I went backward, of course, facing her, and her angry, fat, raised arms—and behind her, laughing hysterically, the man. My God! When I got outside, away from her vituperations! What a woman!

## V

I WENT back along the way I had come. I did not notice now the pines, the sand, the hopeless dwellings. A curious past was weaving itself in my mind; that dirty woman, years ago; sloppy even then, but young. . . . A little boy, who discovered the truth one day. . . . And the trunk up in the garret. . . . The books. . . . The whippings. . . . The waiting at the post-office for a letter that never came. . . . The boys that called after him. I remembered the boys of whom I had asked the way. I pictured him coming back from the village after a conflict with a mob of such boys. *Mob!* No wonder he hated all that mob stood for. He would have liked to have been superior to them. Do human beings make a goal of that which, denied them, has caused them suffering and humiliation? A tremendous pity overcame me. Sentimental—perhaps!

I passed the cellars of the large building that had been destroyed by fire—and smiled at the thought that only half an hour before I had romanced those ruins into some connection with Clive. . . . And I thought of his father. I recalled Liz Tate's spare words about him; and I felt that in this little settlement he must have become a legend,



that in every one of these houses which he had so often passed they told some story of him.

The old storekeeper was outside his door.

"How'd things go?" he cried as I came up. A cunning curiosity gleamed in his eyes.

I determined to make him pay for the information he wanted.

"Oh—pretty well!" And I looked at him knowingly.

He trembled in anticipation—really trembled.

"Found 'er all right, eh?"

I told him that I had, and let my tone convey that what I had found was a great pity.

"Well, she allers was slack," he said, and spat. "Th' hull fambly was slack. Did y' see th' feller she's got living up there with her now?"

I fixed him with a confidential eye. "Of course *she* wouldn't say much," I began. "Naturally!" Then: "Do you remember much about it?"

The memory of the recent suit for slander must have stirred him, for he looked at me suspiciously.

"Well, I can't tell you no more than common truth," he said cautiously—"what they'd all tell you any place in Hokeville these past twenty years. But 't ain't so much after all," he added, as if thinking longingly of newer, juicier scandals.

I borrowed a match. "How did he come to live here in the first place?"

"'Twas after th' fire—" He broke off: "Did y' notice up the road th' cellars of a builidin'—where there'd been a fire?"

I nodded. Had my first impression been right?"

"Th' Pine Tree Inn burnt down there thirty years ago this summer. Great big hotel. They thot 'twould make a mint o' money back here in th' pines."

A passing buggy claimed his attention for a minute. (So the ruins had been nothing more sinister than a summer hotel. Ridiculous that I hadn't thought of that.)

He went on:

"It caught fire one night and burnt up. They was a crowd of summer folks stopping there, and th' next mornin' they all had to go—there wasn't no place for them to stop. All but *him*. He went over an' got board with th' Tates. Told 'em th' pines was doin' him so much good that he couldn't afford to leave. He hadn't no money—that was th' trouble. But he kept tellin' Mrs. Tate that he was goin' to get money from his family in England. But none come!" the old man added with great scorn. "An' first thing, he was in with Liz and she goin' to have a young one. After that Liz an' her ma kept him goin'."

"Poor fellow!" I said with an air of knowledge.

He looked at me curiously.

"Be you th' lawyer?"

"Not exactly," I answered. "I'm a friend."

"She's been expectin' a lawyer 't come an' give her a lot o' money ever since he died. She's been settin' up there in all her dirt, thinkin' how she was goin' to lord it over th' rest of us some day. Ha-ha!" he croaked gloomily. "But what'd she do with it? Slack, that's what she is."

"Did people like him?" I ventured.

"Oh, all right! He come down pretty low, though, afore he died. D'y'e know what?"—and he chuckled: "He usta go marching along th' road every day, gettin' th' air, he called it, wearin' an old pair of woolen underdrawers around his neck fer muffler, with th' legs tied up under his chin!"

The old man shook all over at this memory. "Did y' ever hear o' anything like that, eh? Walkin' along like a soldier, swingin' an old pine stick!"

A woman arrived and went into the store.

"Is she and Clivie goin' to get th' money, eh?" he shot at me.

And all at once I remembered that I had never told Liz Tate of her son's death.

A perverse inspiration seized me—whom she had called a rotten summer



visitor. I opened my pocketbook and found the clipping of his death.

"You must be the bearer of the news," I said solemnly. "I didn't have the heart to tell her."

I handed him the clipping. "Give her this."

He took it, vaguely looking at the printed lines, and I saw that he couldn't read without glasses—perhaps not at all.

"He died a great man!" I said impressively. "Hokeville should be proud of him—its only hero."

Inside the woman rapped impatiently on the glass case.

The old man stared at me, amazed. "He's dead?"

I nodded, pointing to the paper: "I have told you, he died a great man."

I turned away after an abrupt salute to the old man and walked rapidly off. I could feel his eyes following me. As I went back along the small street I felt myself accompanied by the ghost of the Major of the photograph, grown old and thin, wearing his underdrawers as a muffler round his neck, ruined by his taste for the low, but for all that stepping beside me with a military stride and a fine swing to his primitive cane. . . .

## VI

It must have been three weeks later that I found a stranger waiting for me on my return from the office. He stood up as I entered, a round, tough, horny little man in cheap clothes, and regarded me with an awkward stare. "Mr. Williams?" I told him that I was. He ran his fingers round the inside of his collar and really blushed.

"I've come all the way from Veraguay," he said, with the air of hinting that I might have made him more welcome. "I sent you the trunk and wrote you—yes."

From Veraguay!

Again the stirring sense of impending excitement caught me. After my trip to Hokeville I no longer felt that it would be given to me to know the

secret of his death; the secret of his birth was enough. What was it that had brought a significant ending to his thwarted life? Now I was to know. They had come all the way . . . But I was wrong. Mr. Small was here on a business trip only. He wished to be entertained—shown the ropes.

"Just so as to know what to do with my money," he said; adding that he had never been before to New York. "I'm here for the new government, buying; they're paying me well. And then I thought you'd like to hear about him—Auchincloss."

The name lingered in the air without comment from either of us while I went through the amenities. I would be glad to put him wise—tell him all the amusing places. And meantime, would he join me in some excellent Scotch?

A smile and a look of relief answered this: you bet he would!

"I'm anxious to hear the details of Auchincloss' death," I added.

He sat down, and as I poured out the whisky he explained that that was, of course, one of his reasons for looking me up.

"You don't get nothing from the papers!" he cried, at the same time sizing up my room. "It's a good thing we found your address, Mr. Williams. Yes. He wanted all his stuff burned. But his folks should have it. Don't you think so?"

He must have noticed my abstracted gaze, for he paused. I was thinking of that mother of Clive's back in Jersey. I replied that indeed he'd been right—wondering if from this hard, ordinary man I could get something more than the facts. I offered him a cigar. He began explaining about the revolution—the numerous revolutions in Veraguay.

"The new government's all right—a republican, working-class rule. I wrote you that they was putting up a statue to our friend?"

"You knew him well?" I asked curtly. He made an offhand gesture. "Sure—pretty well."

It seemed that my visitor had boarded with a certain Señora Santos—the very

place that Clive had chosen on arriving at the strange town.

"He never said nothing to nobody," Mr. Small went on, "but we all knew he was looking for a job. We never took to him. Not that we'd bother to dislike him—there was too much else going on."

"You didn't like him, then?" I asked abruptly.

He seemed to hesitate. "No, I guess we didn't. When he first come there was a sort of guerilla warfare going on among the peons. He let us see somehow—without saying nothing—that he was, well, contemptuous. D'you see?"

He had taken another and larger drink of whiskey and I noticed a slight burning on his cheekbones. For a moment he seemed lost completely in the past. He drew a deep breath.

"You ought to see that old house of Señora Santos!" he said. "It's outside of town, on the road to the mines. The mulepacks with th' silver passes by there once a week. It was there it all happened—everything!"

He looked about my room with a certain scorn.

"You ought to see that house—earth floors—"

"I felt that he wanted tremendously to give me a vivid picture of the place, but that it became confused before his efforts to put it into words.

"And she—there's a woman! A real revolutionist! But she takes in boarders—like him, for instance."

He paused; a peculiar, embarrassed look came into his eyes.

"Sometimes I don't know what to think about him"—he said—"and that's the truth!"

"What happened?" I asked.

He appeared to pull himself together.

"He was a great man!" he said firmly.

"A hero! He became converted to the cause at the last—yes. He died for us—yes, sir. If he had not given up his life old Batiste Tornos would still be choking the life out of Veraguay."

"You speak of us—" I ventured. "You mean you—"

"I mean that I, I"—his small eyes glowed—"was one of the Eight. . . .

Why was Señora Santos' house famous? Because we met there every night in her back room, behind the kitchen. For over a year we planned everything—and little by little the workers in the mines became prepared."

Suddenly he rose to his feet.

"Three times we were ready to make the attack! Three times something went wrong at the last moment! And this ugly peon—yes, sir, he was nothing but a peon himself—this Batiste Tornos holdin' the whole country in his dirty pig's hands, playing the mining interests, sweatin' the life's blood out of the very people he come up from. Dictator—that was the right name for him. But a beggar on horseback, Mr. Williams!" he snorted. "As I was saying, three times already something had went wrong. They were beginning to lose faith in us."

"Finally Auchincloss became interested—joined you?" I asked.

He looked at me with scorn.

"He? D'you think we'd let a stranger in? My God! I've lived there twenty years. I guess we was always a little suspicious of him anyways," he forced himself to add. "Did y' know that he was going to superintend some inland rancho for a rich old Spaniard? But he lost the job—his friend died."

I nodded. But Mr. Small was not looking at me. In his absent eye was concentrated some excitement of the past.

"I won't forget that night!" he said, and shook his head.

"Well, what happened?" I asked impatiently.

He frowned.

"If I could only make you see how important it was that nothing go wrong *that* time!" he said. "If anything had slipped they'd have sunk back for good into the old rut. They wouldn't have cared. There'd have been no revolution. Everything was ready. The peons was armed. The whole thing lay quiet for the signal to all together"—he made a movement like a conductor with his baton—"all together rise!"

"It must have been exciting!" I murmured inadequately.

He paid no attention.

"The time was set for July 15th—at noon. At night they suspect—they guard everything. Everything's fine. It can be done—if the Government don't find out somehow beforehand. If they do—the game's up!"

He made a sweeping gesture.

"And Auchincloss knew nothing of all this?" I said after a silence.

"No—he didn't. Can I have another drink? Thanks. But he must have been in sympathy, a love for humanity," he explained in a slightly soap-box manner.

I smiled—and felt bewildered.

"Well, what happened?"

Mr. Small insisted before he go on that I understand how very important it was that the whole thing be kept a secret. I assured him that I did.

"Well, then," he said, "this is the dope. We had a last meeting the night of the fourteenth at Señora Santos' house. We was all there—the eight of us." He told me the names of his comrades. "Somehow, we hadn't been there more than half an hour when we begun to get nervous. Seems as if we felt there was someone outside, spyin'. . . . Señora Santos had gone up to see her sister, who was dying; but one of the fellows, Mestalla, who boarded there, too, he suggested that we go up to his room. We felt that we'd be safer there."

He paused.

"I wish you could have been in that room with us!" he cried suddenly. "Hot! Eight of us . . . on the bed . . . on the floor . . . the windows closed. But we stood it because we thought that we was safe, see?"

He got up, and, crossing the room, opened the window.

"I'm coming to your friend now," he said, returning. I saw that his forehead was covered with perspiration. "Everything happens now—quick." He sat down. "Mestalla, who was a great talker, let himself go. He stood in the middle of the room and made a speech

that I'll never forget, sir! He speaks of the revolution that breaks tomorrow on the stroke of noon, he tells us all over again what parts we play; and then he goes on and talks of the time when the people would all be free and equal and own everything themselves. It was great. 'In that flowery land of the future!' I remember he winds up. And he stands there with one hand outstretched, watching us admire him. . . . It was then we heard someone in the next room—and the wall was like paper."

Mr. Small, after a pause, turned on me abruptly: "Have you ever heard a man spit, sir?"

Before I could command any sort of an answer he went on:

"That's what we heard—a man spit. It had a terrible funny effect on us, Mr. Williams. Spittin's meant contempt through all the ages, I guess. And that's how we felt—as though someone back of that wall had been listening to everything and then spit—on us. It was—queer."

"Eight men jumps to their feet and to the door in just one leap. *Spy!* I pulled the door open and we crammed into the passage. The door to the next room was locked. I knocked while the men stood waiting. It was a minute before the key turns and Auchincloss looks out. He was pale.

"'You heard everything, eh?' Mestalla asks him.

"'You talked enough!' says Auchincloss. He said it as though he had no use for the lot of us, Mr. Williams! Yes, sir!"

Small narrowed his heated eyes at me.

"I can't understand it, sir. If he'd only let us know! When he said that there was a sound come from the men half grunt, half growl. There was only one thing for us to do, y' see, Mr. Williams. We couldn't take a chance."

"You killed him?" I asked.

Small raised his hand.

"We would have. But at that very second—while we stood there with that one thought in our minds—there were yells, crashes, shots! The Government

soldiers had sneaked in on us—made a raid. Someone overturned the lamp. Did you ever hear men fightin' in the dark, groaning and cursing and crying?" Small stood up. "Then windows began to crash. Men jumped. I jumped. They had soldiers stationed outside, but some of us got away—we knew the place better than they did." He sat down again abruptly. "Yes—old Tornos had suspected something—felt it in his bones likely—and made a raid. They'd had their eye on the Señora Santos' *casa* for some time. They got four of us—two in the room, two outside as they were making their escape. Killed outright." He mentioned four names with a sort of hardness. "The rest of us got away." He showed me a scarred hand. "I don't know as I tell it like much—that row."

"But how about Auchincloss?" I asked.

"I'm coming to that," he went on. "An hour later the four of us that was left met in a little hut near the mines—as we had agreed to do if anything went wrong. And that was what we asked each other—had he been killed? We could only curse ourselves for not having seen to it. He'd heard everything, probably—the day, the hour—where the munitions were hidden."

I sat without a word during the pause that followed.

"About two o'clock that night one of our spies came in," Mr. Small continued, "with the news that the Americano was alive. He had been led from the Señora Santos' house handcuffed, between two soldiers. Yes, sir. We looked at each other and groaned. We didn't know what to think. Some had thought he was a spy. Now they saw he wasn't. But it would make no difference. He would tell them all he had overheard and then they would let him go."

His hand stopped halfway to a drink that I had poured for him.

"Why didn't he tell?" he asked himself in a puzzled voice. "I can't see why. 'Twasn't even as if we'd let him know and he'd felt in honour bound

that he oughtn't to tell. No. We'd been going to do for him. Do you see why not?" he asked me suddenly.

I couldn't help smiling—in *vino veritas*.

"You'll have to tell me more about it, Mr. Small."

"More? The revolution was a success, wasn't it?" He looked at me aggressively. "At noon the next day—*caramba!* It went like a breeze."

"But he—?" I said impatiently.

Mr. Small had his drink.

"He had died rather than tell 'em anything," he said. "At sunrise. We heard the rattle of the rifles up on the mountainside. We didn't know what it meant. But a little later a whisper—an excitement—went through all the countryside." He lifted his hand. "Tornos had shot him as a revolutionist. He had given his life. By nine o'clock that morning everything had quieted. Batiste Tornos thought it was all over—that he had thrown a scare into us—that it had been nothing important anyway. But every dam' peon, Mr. Williams, was up, flaming! And the rumour spread of how they'd tortured him."

He paused and frowned, gazing at his boots as at some unpleasant sight.

"When the two days' fighting was over we found his body in the courtyard full of bullets," he went on. "They'd tortured him all right—we could see that. Yes. We buried him the next day. A real funeral! Men wept, sir! There was a silk banner carried before the coffin, LIBERATOR OF THE OPPRESSED. The women had embroidered it. And there will be a statue of bronze in the Plaza."

A silence followed the great gesture of his words. Mr. Small looked at the decanter, hesitated, and stared again at his boots. I wondered if he had finished his story; I was thwarted, uneasy, up in the air. A dramatic tale; a flourish of blood and glory against the hot background of a little republic; but what of Clive?

"Does no one know how he acted—what he said?" I exclaimed.



Mr. Small raised his eyes. "Yes. One of us—a revolutionist—was a member of the guard that brought him before Tornos."

He reached out, unable to resist the decanter, and poured himself another drink. I felt a faint hope.

"Did he seem frightened?"

Small smiled with scorn.

"He—no! When they brought him in, handcuffed, Tornos laughed in his face. Tornos had a way of sticking his greasy face right into yours and breathing on you—a little trick of his.

"American troublemaker, you shall eat out of my hands before dawn!" he says. He thought Auchincloss was one of us. Any little scene like this was Tornos' meat. But Auchincloss draws himself up and says: 'I will not explain anything.' Tornos gets red behind the ears when he hears that. He comes up close to Auchincloss and sticks his face into his and breathes on him. 'You won't, eh?' he whispers—and gives a smile that would sicken anybody. Then he turns to the guards. 'Downstairs with him!' Mr. Small made a gesture. "Old Tornos wouldn't stand for anyone talking to him like that."

"Horrible!" I murmured.

"Yes," said Mr. Small. "Can you imagine him acting like that to men that had him in their power? He meant what he said, too. He never spoke another word—no, not a word. They kept at him all night. And Tornos watchin'—getting his revenge. (Well, we done for him next day!) They say that when they took Auchincloss out at

sunrise to be shot they gave him a last chance. But he didn't even notice it."

Mr. Small leaned his head reflectively on his hand. After a moment he yawned.

"It's queer . . ." he said. "He must have gotten hold of some of our propaganda. And yet . . ."

As I said nothing, he rose. He looked sleepy.

"I am going to send you a photograph of that statue!" he said, and glanced about for his hat.

\* \* \*

Five minutes later I returned to my room after having taken him down to the door. An odour of stale cigarettes and whiskey hung in the air; I went across to the window and opened it and stood breathing in the coolness of the night. I recalled how Clive had stood one evening and looked down into the street and despised it and the passing people. But out in Vereguay a whole people thought that he had died for them. He hated them; and he had died a martyr for his hatred. He was too contemptuous to bother explaining. He had sacrificed his life to preserve that attitude of his.

After all, I reflected, such an attitude is not a fine one—one might even say that he had died the supreme snob. But is there not fineness in being possessed by one idea and dying for it? And I saw him again, bitter and despairing, a weak, impotent soul striving for something beyond himself, and, in his own way, succeeding.



LOVE has the glamour of a mediæval ritual. Marriage is like an initiation into the order of Elks.



# Conversations

## VII—On Editing a Magazine

*Set down by Major Owen Hatteras*

*Scene: Campbell's Funeral Church*

*Time: Between two funerals*

MENCKEN

THE scene just brought to a harmonious close has greatly depressed me. What could be more pathetic than the funeral of a magazine editor?

NATHAN

Perhaps the funeral of a magazine.

MENCKEN

I doubt it. So far, I have never attended one—if, in fact, they are ever held—but I once went to the funeral of a newspaper. I was the chief mourner. Nay, I was a sort of right hind leg of the actual corpse. Nevertheless, the whole thing was banal—as flabby and disappointing as a beheading or a honeymoon. All the great overt acts of life are similarly pifflish. One thinks of dying as of a great adventure. It is, in reality, simply a colossal exaggeration of having a tooth pulled. Maybe not that. Even in war a man seldom faces death in the full possession of his faculties. He is usually in a stupor; if he is not in a stupor he is scared so badly that he is almost anaesthetic. Thus he dies, so to speak, boozy. It is no worse, I daresay, than kissing a woman congressman when one is drunk.

NATHAN

But if my recollection serves me you were but recently saying that the funeral of a magazine editor is pathetic.

MENCKEN

His funeral, yes—but not his death. The funeral is not a natural process; it is a work of art—the fruit of thousands of years of idealistic ingenuity among millions of asses. Need I remind you that a work of art is always more poignant and moving than anything produced by unaided nature? Compare the average woman in the altogether with the same woman in her best frock, or even in a *robe de nuit*. Only Puritans believe that the human body, the masterpiece of the Creator, is beautiful in itself; only Puritans are moved by it. Some, moved only so far, become bad artists and try to paint it. Others, moved intolerably, bawl for the gen-darmes. Both factions are swine.

NATHAN

I hope you will not be affronted if I tell you that it is my natural tendency to suspect your ideas. But in this case you appeal to my judgment. Unquestionably, a gal dressed up tastily is more appetizing to the eye than the same mammal *in toto*. More, it is still pleasanter merely to dream about her than actually to meet her, even dolled up. I have a theory that no intelligent man ever loves a woman truly until he knows her so well that he doesn't really see her when he talks to her—that is, until she ceases to arrest his actual attention. What he talks to thereafter is an artificiality created by his own imagination.

If the woman is clever she quickly converts herself into this artificiality, or, at all events, tries to do so. If she succeeds, the man is lost. His ideal has him by the ear.

MENCKEN

You rise to my notion very gracefully. Thus I assume that I have your support in the matter of funerals. Death itself is a mere chemical reaction, and no more interesting, at bottom, than the fermentation that goes on in a vat of beer. But the ensuing funeral is romantic, appealing, almost voluptuous. It is to the mere physical blow-off what a superb drinking song, say "Toss the Pot" or the *brindisi* in "Giroflé-Giroflá" is to the lowly offices of Emil, the brewer's sexton. Poetry goes into a funeral. It may be the poor, pitiful poetry of stupid and unimaginative persons, but it is poetry none the less. A dog dies like a man, but a dog could not imagine a funeral. Even an Odd Fellows' funeral would be beyond him. Have you ever been to an Elks' lodge of sorrow? No? Then go the next time Frank Crowninshield invites you. They have a large bank of electric lights on the stage, and as the names of the brethren laid away during the year are read by the Supreme Worthy Lugubrious the lights go out one by one. He reads "Hermann Metwurst," and out goes a light. Then "Terence Casey," and out goes another. Then "Gerald Hornstein," and out goes a third. And so on. Don't laugh! It is, superficially, idiotic, just as it is superficially idiotic for a man to come out on a public stage and begin hauling a hank of horsehair over the embalmed duodenum of a cat. But under the surface indecency, in each case, there is a noble striving toward beauty. The Elks are poets. They try to make death lovely and pathetic.

NATHAN

I catch your point. You argue that the funeral of a magazine editor is pathetic, but concede that the pathos is intrinsic in the funeral, and not derived from any nobility or dignity in the life

and career of the man himself. The concept is certainly not obnoxious to me. But if you had argued that—

MENCKEN

Oh, by no means!

NATHAN

In any case, the dead editor himself is of small interest. He is even of less interest dead than he was alive. Have you ever heard of anyone—that is, any stranger, say a distinguished French or British visitor—going out to a graveyard to put a tin wreath on the grave of a magazine editor? Who knows, indeed, where the editor of *Godey's Lady's Book* is buried? To achieve an almost perfect obscurity a magazine editor doesn't even have to die; all he has to do is to lose his job. Consider, for example, Edward W. Bok. Twenty years ago, in the full flush of his editorial glory, he was one of the most eminent men in the country. Today he is scarcely more heard of than Johann Sebastian Bach.

MENCKEN

Melancholy fancies, to be sure! Yet there is an undoubted allurements in the profession. All authors wish that they were editors. Even you and I, who are certainly devoid of most of the ambitions which harass literary gents, are nevertheless quite willing to do the most menial tasks for the *Smart Set*—for instance, translating American short stories into English, punctuating poetry, and going out to dinner with novelists, playwrights and publishers.

NATHAN

And why not? The editorial chair is a vampire for two plain reasons. In the first place, editing a magazine is one of the easiest jobs known in Christendom. Anyone, in fact, is able to fill it—that is, any literate man. He may be unable, of course, to fill it successfully, but all the same he can fill it. This is certainly not true of most other human vocations. To cut off a leg, however badly, a man must at least have a modest grounding in the elements of anatomy

and pathology. To defend a criminal in the courts, he must at least know the common jargon of the law, and be able to distinguish between the judge on the bench and the chief perjurer for the People. To preach the word of God, he must at least be apparently sober and have on his pantaloons. But a magazine editor is required to show no such fundamental competence. If he can read and write, that is enough. All the rest is mere *lagniappe*. I have edited the *Smart Set* when suffering from such severe neuralgia that I could not distinguish between a pretty miss and a major-general in the Army at ten paces. I have done it when full of so vile a megrim that the roof of my head seemed to lift six inches every time I drew breath. I have done it after receiving such a letter from a fair creature that many a man would have leaped forthwith out of the sixteenth story window. No doubt you yourself have even stranger tales to tell. Now and then you send me word from Baltimore that some one down there has pulled off a beer-party surpassing anything ever heard of by the Romans. For two or three days thereafter I get no direct word from you; you are apparently quite unable to write a simple picture-postcard. Nevertheless, you continue your editorial functions all the while, and show all of your normal competence. So far as I can remember, you have never delayed reading or punctuating a manuscript for any such reason. You may be laid up at the Johns Hopkins, with two or three nurses laving you with ammonia, but all the same you remain as good an editor as you ever are.

MENCKEN

I fear you exaggerate my disability. I never—

NATHAN

Exactly. But certainly you will admit that there are times when, for this or that physical or psychological reason, you are quite unable to compose a single line of passable prose. And certainly you will also admit that you are quite com-

petent, at such times, to perform your editorial duties—that is, as well as you ever perform them.

MENCKEN

On reflection I am disposed to agree with you, at least tentatively. But what is the second lure you mentioned?

NATHAN

The lure of being able to print one's own compositions *ad lib*. This, I take it, is what fetches the great majority of literati. There never lived an author without a grievance of some sort or other against an editor. It is a universal pestilence. And out of the grievance grows the notion of a remedy. That remedy is to set up shop as an editor one's self. Very few authors, of course, ever find it possible to do so. Hence they hate the small number of authors who do. *Ergo*, the auctorial hatred of editors is doubly-distilled.

MENCKEN

And absolutely justified. As you have already demonstrated, a magazine editor is probably the most incompetent professional man in the world; he is even more incompetent than the theologian who swindles poor old women by promising to save them from hell. The theologian at least does his damndest; not infrequently he actually believes in his own preposterous sorceries. But the magazine editor is simply a scoundrel. In his dealings with authors he is utterly without conscience. Their livelihood, their peace of mind, their very sacred honour is and are in his hands. Yet who ever heard of him paying any heed to such things? His one aim is to sell his puerile and scabrous magazine. If he can do it by debauching and degrading an author, he never hesitates an instant. The beaches of beautiful letters are covered with the carcasses of his victims. I scarcely know of an author who has not been brought down in the world of the spirit by his dealings with magazines. Their influence is almost invariably corrupting. No man can pass through the magazines without



gross damage to his spiritual kidneys. For this the editor is to blame.

NATHAN

As an author, I agree with you. But as a magazine editor, I file a caveat. You are altogether too damned sweeping. In witness whereof I point to myself as Exhibit A. Show me an author that I have thus brought down.

MENCKEN

The answer is two-fold. On the one hand, you are surely a hell of an editor, judged by any intelligible standards. On the other hand—

NATHAN

I dispute it. On the contrary, it seems to me that I am almost the ideal editor—that is, from the standpoint of an author. And for a simple reason. I never give a hoot about the public taste; for all I care, the public may rot away in its wallow. All I ask is that the author send in something that pleases *me*. If he does, then I vote for it. This, of course, bars out whole categories of authors. Nothing that Ellen Key, say, could write, or Dr. Frank Crane, or Herbert Adams Gibbons, or Blasco Ibáñez, or Isaac Marcossou, or Corra Harris, could ever conceivably caress my gills. But I am surely not unjust to such authors. I simply deny them justice altogether, and notify them of it in advance. They are wholly devoid of standing in my editorial court, just as a man who believes in the Constitution is in the Supreme Court of the United States. Let them beware! In point of fact, they accept the situation without complaint. So far as I am aware Blasco has never uttered a word against me, though he was long ago notified that I regard him as a clown. But to all other authors I am almost ideally hospitable. All they have to do is to send in something that happens to tickle me—and then you—and the cheque goes out on Thursday.

MENCKEN

A simple and honest system, but it has its drawbacks nevertheless. Sup-

pose you happen to be bilious? What then?

NATHAN

The bitter goes with the sweet. True enough, there are days when I am full of acids, and nothing seems good to me. But on the other hand there are days when I feel like a girl at her first party, and then I am surely an easy mark.

MENCKEN

It is on such days that I earn my honorarium. If the stuff that you vote for actually got into the magazine, then the barber shops would begin to take it in as a comic paper.

NATHAN

Maybe so. But the fact that you exist is part of my theory. It takes two editors to play this novel and delicate game. On the days when I am too happy, and hence too easy, you are usually suffering from arterio-sclerosis, or lumbago, or tonsillitis, or one of your other curses, and so you act as a fly-wheel. And *vice versa*. Many a time, within a day or two after some elderly wench has smiled at you, you have passed to me manuscripts so bad that their publication would have ruined both of us. Fortunately, every such occasion has found me suffering with a ringing in the ears or spots before the eyes, and so I have saved the magazine.

MENCKEN

As you say, and *vice versa*. But all the same, the system has its defects—that is, from the standpoint of the author. It is easier for him, true enough, to please the two of us than it is for him to meet the notions of some poor outcast who is trying his darndest, by some theory of least squares, to work out what the people want out in Akron, O., or Sheboygan, Wis. You and I are at least concrete men, and moderately sane. The average magazine editor is simply a preposterous formula, and against all sense. But none the less, the author is hampered by our prejudices. He must compose something that lies without the range of our tastes.

NATHAN

Well, it is *our* magazine, not his. Moreover, he has one plain advantage: he is trying to please a pair of literary birds, who at all events have the prejudices that are common to the trade, and that he himself may be presumed to share. Very few other magazine editors in America are literary birds themselves. Go over the list. There is —, for example. How often hasn't he told us that he was apprenticed to a gambler in his youth, and that he wishes heartily that he were a faro-dealer today? Then there is —, by trade a college professor. Then there is —, an ex-clergyman, unfrocked for a very secular transaction with a fat contralto. Then there is —, a newspaper reporter. What was — four years ago? Press-agent for a celebrated courtesan. What was —? A carpet-sweeper salesman. What was —? A lawyer. What was —? An osteopath.

MENCKEN

Your remarks, in general, are very instructive, and even convincing. It is obviously advantageous to an author to deal with editors who are also authors. But I often wonder if, in the long run, it is an advantage to an author to *be* an editor. Take my own case. At least four times a month I receive intolerably bad manuscripts from the literary critics of obscure provincial papers—and sometimes from critics who are anything but obscure. Well, whenever I send one back, accompanied by a polite rejection slip, I am subsequently denounced in the *Oil City Bugle* or the *St. Joseph Staats-Zeitung* as an idiot and a scoundrel.

NATHAN

Well?

MENCKEN

I don't object to the conclusion; I object to the reasoning.

NATHAN

'Fish! What is the difference? Suppose the *Oil City Bugle*, instead of calling the attention of the Department of

Justice to you, *praised* you? Then what? Some woman's club in the town would invite you to lecture, and the local Baptist university would propose to make you an LL.D.

MENCKEN

Nonsense. That is exactly what happens now. Your understanding of women, as I have often argued, is very defective. Every time I am denounced in some provincial newspaper as an immoral author, the women's clubs for miles around invite me to lecture. You assume that women admire the poor fish they marry. Far from it. They may respect such vermin in a way, but they don't like to hear them talk. When they get together for a pleasant afternoon they want to hear racy stuff. Well, they know what is in all the books praised by their local papers—optimism, idealism, patriotism, encouragement to noble living. *Ergo*, they read the books most violently denounced. *Encore ergo*, they want to hear the authors. This brings down a nuisance upon my head. I have to write lying letters of declination, saying that I am down with sciatica or on my honeymoon.

NATHAN

Is it, then, unpleasant to lie to women? What a philosophy!

MENCKEN

Monotony is never pleasant. Nor is it agreeable to get money by false pretenses. Whenever I send a rejection slip to a provincial critic, I am sure of a round slating, and every time I get a round slating my books sell in that town, and my royalties increase. Well, the trouble is that the women who buy my books under such circumstances are swindled. They expect very hot stuff; what they get is metaphysics. Worse, their sense of having been defrauded converts itself, by a well-known psychological process, into the notion that I have defrauded them. As a matter of fact, I have done nothing of the sort. All I have done has been to perform a routine act of editorial vigilance.

NATHAN

Well, my case is worse. You send back forty times as many manuscripts as I do—and yet I am attacked in exactly the same way. What is to be done about it?

MENCKEN

Nothing. I have a complete record of all such transactions running back five years. I even have sworn copies of many of the manuscripts submitted. I have often thought of printing the whole thing in a book, to be called, say, "*The Smart Set Rejection-Slip Association*"—first, the bad manuscripts; then the ensuing slatings. But it would be too cruel. Moreover, it would be silly. Any man who writes a book is an ass. He deserves all the punishment that he gets.

NATHAN

Still, you lament rather ineptly. Think—as I have said—what would happen to us if those fellows praised us; indeed, think what actually did happen—in the case of "*The American Credo*." There we sat ourselves down and composed a tome that studiously insulted every American institution and every Americano that we didn't like and, lo and behold, the whole caboodle of newspaper reviewers hopped on the beer-keg and agreed with us absolutely. With what result, my friend? The book was a flat failure. Knopf had to sell his wolf-hound and his collection of lemon-yellow neckties to pay his rent that month. Once let the newspaper sodality begin to like our brand of hokum, and we're done for. Before "*The American Credo*," our books, subjected to constant and vicious drum-fire, were successes. With the "*Credo*" came good notices, and the threat of ruin. I have a feeling that the newspaper boys and girls, seized with a sudden astuteness, did the thing deliberately.

MENCKEN

That is always the way it happens. Plant your gun carefully, load it with a well-polished shell, blaze away at what

seems to be the psychological instant—and you miss the mud-turtle by a mile. The intrinsic trouble was that the book was printed a year too late. Had we rushed it into type when we first thought of it, it would have made a smash. Nearly all patriotic booksellers would have refused to handle it, it would have been barred from the mails, and Knopf would have been jailed. But we wasted so much time putting it together that when it came out at last it fell flat. In the interval a quite simple thing happened: the country reacted violently against the Wilsonian blather. On all sides the national superstitions began to be questioned. As a result the book was an anti-climax. We simply underestimated the force and speed of the reaction against Wilson and his balderdash. The man was so dead when our book came out that even the boobs in the street sniffed as they passed him. But something may yet be done. Such publications as Upton Sinclair's pamphlet, "*The Brass Check*," offer me a chance to write and print a violent attack upon the newspapers. This may prick some tender hides, and so get us some hearty slatings. At all events, it will be worth trying. At bottom, however, I fear that it is too late. Even the most tremendous attacks, considering the general state of public opinion, could scarcely ever again put the book on its feet. A newspaper review is not a fire, it is simply a match. If the boobs are ready, it sets them off. If they are not, they don't notice it.

NATHAN

Let us bury the corpse, and forget it. Mons. Knopf makes altogether too much money out of us as it is. What interests me more at the moment is a delicately polite scheme for getting rid of the newspaper book reviewers who come to call on us in person with their manuscripts, and get sore when we send out word that we can't see them as we are receiving only blondes under twenty-two and bootleggers that day.

MENCKEN

I have long had my mind on the same

subject. I have an idea or two to suggest when you are done. What is your plan?

NATHAN

I suggest that we let the boys and girls in.

MENCKEN

Never! How could we get rid of them once they *were* in? They sit like so many mustard plasters.

NATHAN

Comes now my idea. I have evolved a sweet device. Let us have a hole of some three inches in diameter bored through the partition into the adjoining office. Behind this hole, situated near the floor, let us station Marcel, the office lad. To this Marcel let us vouchsafe such a smoke-making apparatus as they use on the theatrical stage. Upon a pre-arranged signal, say a prodigious nose-blow on your part, let the aforesaid Marcel apply the smoke machine to the hole and forthwith burst into the office crying out that the dump is on fire. There you have it!

MENCKEN

A nobby stratagem, I grant you. But it has one defect. The reviewer would already be so suffocated by the brand of cigar you smoke that he wouldn't notice our Marcel's efforts. I have a better plan. Let us eliminate our Marcel and merely hand our guest one of the cigars.

NATHAN

I have tried it. It doesn't work. The last three visitors smacked their lips and stuck to their chairs.

MENCKEN

Yet these things, after all, are not our most serious problems. True enough, when it comes to problems we are much better off than nine-tenths of the other magazine editors, since we needn't give a damn one way or the other. If what we give our readers pleases them, good. If what we give them doesn't please

them, also good. They get too much for their thirty-five cents as it is. We don't charge them enough. We can, without interference on the part of some Munsey or other, stick to our policy of printing nothing that we are not both sure of—that is, if we can get enough stuff of that sort. Questions of "advisability" and the like—the bane of the average editor—need never concern us. More magazines have been wrecked by this search for advisability than anything else I can think of, save it be too much money.

NATHAN

I am in full accord with you. Consider two of the greatest magazine successes of recent years in America: the *Saturday Evening Post* and the *Atlantic Monthly*, a brace of corpses revived into tremendous vigour. Well, neither Lorimer of the *Post* nor Sedgwick of the *Atlantic* bothers specifically about what it is advisable to print, nor even about what his public wants. Each simply prints what he likes himself. Both have made fortunes for themselves and the *entrepreneurs* behind them by assuming that what *they* like will also be liked by thousands of other right-thinking men. Our opportunity is just as clear. Let us assume that there are thousands of other Americans who have just as little virtue in them as I have, and just as little taste as you.

MENCKEN

What you say diverts and instructs me. You have reached such a stage of cunning that you can put my own ideas into such ingratiating phrases that they convince even me. Magazine editing at its most proficient is simply a tournament in autobiography. The more an editor tries deliberately to please the public, the quicker he comes a cropper. If he pleases himself—as, say, Siddall of the *American* pleases himself—he gets rich, and wears diamonds. Look over the list of magazine editors and publishers who have tried to please not themselves, but the public: McClure,



Walker, John Phillips, Ridgeway, Munsey, Collier—there's no need to lengthen the catalogue. One and all, blooie!

NATHAN

They are bringing in the next coffin. Let us depart.

MENCKEN

Where's my hat?

NATHAN

Which hat was it?

MENCKEN

The one I bought six years ago and always wear.

NATHAN

Doubtless in the coffin.

(*Exeunt*)



## Permanence

By John McClure

*"WHO shall remember longer than a day  
The beauty and the bloom  
Of any splendour man may snatch away  
From the quick claws of doom?"*

*Pictures of flaming beauty, or the tune  
Smitten from cymbals clear  
By mad musicians, giddy with the moon,  
These cannot persevere.*

*The glory and the proud grandiloquence  
Of power and renown  
Scatter before the winds of circumstance  
Like golden thistle-down.*



*IN dealing with women it doesn't matter so much if you forget faces so long as you remember perfumes.*



*POETRY eschews problems. It prates only of love and leaves marriage to the novelists.*



# Ennui

*By Mabel McElliott*

**T**HE girl was bored. Suddenly and inexplicably and inexorably bored.

The man knew that she was, but did not quite know why. He was a stupid fellow, with a great, gangling body and clumsy hands. He was "not so bad" the girl admitted, in his office clothes . . . in the rather decently fitting "pepper and salt" suit which he wore; but when he'd got on his street things . . . ugly, bulky overcoat and silly, shapeless hat . . . why, he was quite impossible!

Quite! She wondered how she had ever considered being seen with him. hating herself for the innate snobbery of the thought, she shrank from his side.

After all, trifles were the things that counted, she argued. Just as the wrong note in a symphony was likely to set her shivering, teeth on edge, so the wrong note in another's voice . . . the wrong inflection . . . the least mispronunciation . . . jarred her to the utmost.

This hulking boy, with his desirous eyes and peasant's hands, sent her spirit shivering to cover.

She hated him, suddenly.

She hated herself for being with him . . . for having consented to dine with him . . . the way he talked; and, more than that, his stupid, heavy silences. His presence weighed upon her like a visible thing.

What made her loathe people in this unreasoning, swift fashion? Always she thought she was going to be able to "be friends" with someone or other, thought that this or that one would supply the companionship,

the quick understanding that her spirit craved—and always she was disappointed.

She would sparkle for them, as she had for this man, sparkle so delightfully that they would (as he had) "fall for her" with flattering thoroughness. It would seem worthwhile, the game of give and take. It would be, at least, something to take her out of herself, to help her in her task of forgetting. But always the results were the same.

About the second or third meeting, the men would become sickeningly sentimental (as this one had, running true to form). She was not conceited. She did not have the easy, shallow nature that absorbs admiration as a sponge does water; she knew she was not pretty, really, and that any virtues in that line which they attributed to her were the fruits of their own imaginations. But flattery, evidently, was the kind of thing they thought women expected, and that they therefore supplied.

Stupid, all of them! How she wished that something thrillingly new, utterly, utterly different would happen. How she loathed, especially, this wordless one at her side.

Expected her to make conversation, did he? Well, he might go on expecting!

Expected her to sparkle, to scintillate? He might go on waiting for that, too. She was too deadly fatigued to lift his inert spirit on the wings of her own. Besides, hers had no wings tonight. It was a clod; it lay in the dust at the feet of That Other, the man who had, by his own actions, put her out of his life.

Oh well, there was no use pretending she did not understand why these new and promising admirers failed her. They did not measure up, any single one of them. . . .

"Measure up"! That was funny!

As if there were anything to measure up to! As if He had not been a laughing stock of models . . . a libertine, a cad. Liar, too. He had not known *how* to tell the truth.

Conceited. Yes, that, too, he had been. Not a gentleman!

Why on earth had she loved him?

God only knew. And perhaps even He did not.

She had an almost uncontrollable impulse to "start something" by flinging her cup across the table at him. Shivering the delicate china to fragments.

Now she knew why women have hysterics. Out of sheer boredom, it was. Out of a mad desire to break to bits a brittle wall of silence.

No, she would not break it. Let him! Or rather, let him keep up this horrible farce.

Presently the ordeal was over. She managed somehow to gulp down the loathsome table d'hôte demitasse. He was extraordinarily heavy handed, she thought, about the tip. Hated him for it. Hated herself for the feeling.

She avoided letting him help her on with the coat . . . struggled into it madly while he was at the check-room door. He looked foolishly thwarted when he discovered her evasion of his assistance. His lower lip drooped like a sulky, disappointed child's.

He wanted to know if they were going to the theater. She said, edgily, that she didn't know—and her tone added "didn't care."

Idiot! If he had meant to go to the theater why on earth had he not arranged for it before this? Did he suppose they would be able to get decent seats at this late hour?

The prospect of a whole, interminable evening with him sickened her.

Made her actually ill. And if she proposed foregoing the play, it would make the situation no easier. It would only mean that she would have him on her hands all evening. . . . She would have to ask him in . . . it would be intolerable. Because, once inside her own door, she would have to behave differently, have to be decently polite and interested.

A queer sort of code, she reflected. So long as he was in the position of host, she could be as dull as ditch-water. The moment his enormous boot touched her Chinese rug, the positions would be reversed. Then she would have to be "entertaining"—the perfect, untroubled hostess.

She had a feeling he might, then, try to touch her . . . (thinking her unbecomingly) might attempt to kiss her. . . . They did that. . . .

No. Better the theater. Better a long evening of comedy, or drama, (it didn't matter) with a great audience all round about them, than several hours alone with this creature.

Now he was feeling injured. She knew that from his gait, the way he shambled along, casting furtive, sidelong glances at her. She kept a still and icy profile. Curious, how some presences weighed one like lead . . . and others lifted one up.

Of course he *would* bring her to this theater, the very one she and That Other had gone to the first night he had told her that he loved her. It was like this boor to turn the knife in the wound, unknowing.

Could she bear it? The memories were separate, poignant stabs.

One bore everything. It was silly to say that hearts were ever broken . . . absurd! Cracked a trifle, maybe, but only that! One went on, laughing and pretending to enjoy, even when life was quite over. Like hers.

He had insisted on stopping in the foyer and buying a great, insensate box of candy. She hated candy, especially in a theater. He might have known. During the first act

he kept tearing, stealthily, at the wrappings. . . .

She thought she would scream if he kept on surreptitiously rattling the tissue paper. Without turning her head, she knew that he had discovered a second wrapping and was essaying that, too.

When he held the box out to her, with a mumbled whisper, she turned a stony glance of reproof upon him. No, she was not having any. Her look said, plainer than any words, that he was interrupting an important scene.

Several people in the row ahead turned to look reprovingly at them both. Her blood tingled in fury. She felt she could have slain him with her bare hands for inflicting such humiliation upon her.

The intervals were incredibly long. She tried, for appearance's sake, to "make conversation." But now he was too lost in the fog of depression to rally. He was monstrously dull. Monstrous, anyway, the whole deadly evening! Monstrous that she should be giving up her precious time to this sort of fatiguing job, pretending to be amused.

This, too, was the sort of man her people would like her to "be interested in." That was the way they would put it. He was "a good man," she thought they might say . . . "a good provider."

It was no good. No use hoaxing herself with the idea that she might forget That Other in this man's attentions. Attentions, indeed! That was rather ironic, in the face of the evening's tenor.

But it was popularly supposed that "a good man's love" wiped out all sorts of hurts. Why didn't people, in books and plays, tell the truth about this? Why did they fill you, when you were growing up, with all sorts of nonsense about losing one's self in the love that an honest, stupid, honourable man offered one? It wasn't so. One loved, not because of virtues, but in spite of faults.

Love meant putting up with all manner of things . . . patience . . . play acting . . . pretense. It did not mean taking all one could get, of devotion, from this sort of inept lover, and giving nothing. No. That would not do!

That was the final curtain, thank heaven. *What* a time it had in falling. She could struggle again into her things . . . this time with his help . . . smile into his bewildered face . . . tell him in accents hollowly false that she had had "a delightful evening."

Now for home. She would have to ask him if he wanted to come in for a moment, but the way she said it would plainly indicate her real desire.

She knew he would refuse. She shook hands with him limply, and flew within, feeling as if a hundred weight had been lifted.

In her own room, she flung herself limply on the bed, without removing hat or coat.

Was all life to be like this, horribly, incredibly unsatisfactory?

What did she want, anyhow? Did she even know?

(Liar, libertine, cheat, cad! The words sang themselves mockingly over and over again in her tired brain.)

He had said once—That Other—that he would always be at home at this hour . . . if she wanted him. With a sudden, irresistible impulse, she went to the telephone.

Throwing her cap over the windmill, people would say.

Oh well, it didn't matter!

Nothing did!

With him she might be unhappy . . . so sickeningly, bitterly unhappy that her very soul would faint within her.

But with him also, she had been so beautifully, uncaringly, fantastically gay that nothing else on earth had mattered. It was certain that she would not be bored.

She called him.



# On the Corner

*By Leonard Lanson Cline*

THE November wind is sharp, and I shrink down into the collar of my coat, as I stand on the corner tapping the walk with my numb feet, waiting for the downtown bus.

Half a block away, up the sidewalk that unfolds before me like a long corridor, walled and vaulted by the gray trunks and branches of the denuded elms, a little girl is walking, wrapped in a long coat of dull orange colour. And now, at the very end of this long arcade of the sidewalk, where another avenue crosses, a moving-van painted a brilliant vermilion stops. What a charming passage of colour, orange on vermilion, and the two bemisted in the distance by that indefinable dusk that sifts beneath the trees in November! Only a minute, and the van moves away, and the street relaxes from this moment of casual beauty into monotony.

And a lean woman, shivering in her heavy furs, comes down the street, on the other side. How unattractive, how utterly without appeal, she is! And I wonder, can she still be all that some man deems lovely? The old proverb about good looks and good heart comes to mind, but I cannot subscribe to it. Virtue is always negative, I think. How many jousts have been fought, how many gallant lives have been sacri-

ficed, because a woman was noble of heart? None, that occurs to me. Let us see the thing as it is. You may have a face cut angular as by a hatchet, you may have a carriage loose-jointed and awkward—(your portrait, by your leave, strange lady)—and yet you may be the lodestar of the knightliest of men. Sappho was coarse in appearance, it is said, George Sand was even repellent, to some women. And I myself, in some bright drawing-room beside the fire, might look into the eyes of this gaunt female, whom now I see go striding down the street, spinster-like in her furs, and find her amiable. Can one find in psychology, or chemistry, or poetry, the explanation of the secret of that fascination of person which is beauty in effect?

And I am all alone on the street, staring at rows of houses that deploy away from me toward all four points; and all the windows are empty, and only here and there is a wisp of smoke spilling from the fat chimneys, gray against a gray sky.

But rushing down upon me comes my bus, and I think: Is this moment lost? Shall I never know it again? And I feel a delicate regret as I step on board, for the picture and the thought and the falling of mood as light as snow, that the moment has given me.



# Friendship

By J. B. Hawley

## I

LAST week Stephen Wainright died. I didn't see him before he passed into the great unknown. Almost his last words were those which barred me from his room. Yet once we had been friends. And toward his memory I have only the kindest feelings. Perhaps, now, he knows that the act which separated us was done for his own good, his own happiness.

We live in an age of anæmic emotions. Our habits of introspection have drained them of the good red blood. Almost we have succeeded in analyzing them out of existence.

Our novelists and playwrights still scribble down the words which once stood for virile forces. But as their hearts are untouched by love or hate or pity, their words define only pale ghosts of once existent feelings. We are untouched by passions stronger than a child's and we are unaware that others are or have ever been.

And when we stand in the presence of a man or a woman in whom life flows in the grand manner, we are a little awed, a little afraid.

I think that is why we showed Stephen Wainright a deference to which neither his position nor his attainments entitled him. Subconsciously we recognized that here was a man capable of the strength of emotion of a hero of the golden age. We stood aside, silently respectful, watching him tread his path of destiny.

Of all his friends, I think that I alone understood wherein he differed from the rest of us. Often I wondered what would happen were he to meet the op-

portunity to love greatly as Dante loved Beatrice, or to hate as Electra hated. I never hoped to find out. Opportunities for any sort of greatness so seldom come to anyone fit to receive them. Certainly I never expected to play a part in his drama and I would not have had I not been blessed myself with just the tiniest gift of friendship.

Stephen Wainright lived in a small house, half villa, half studio, in St. John's Wood. He was an artist, a painter of portraits when, as he put it, anyone was ridiculous enough to sit for him. Few did sit for him in those early days. Some force in the man made him, all unwittingly, paint the truth as his instinct saw it, and neither his technique nor his sense of colour was great enough to make the truth even halfway palatable. So those queer people who find it necessary to spoil good canvas by having their unbeautiful features set down thereon went to another shop where weaknesses were glossed over and ugliness charitably concealed.

Yet Wainright was not an unhappy man. He accepted his failure to become a great artist philosophically. He spoke of it quite without bitterness, often with humorous tolerance as though it were merely a temporary thing and that some day he would awake to a power equaling Sargent's.

And I think he did look upon the matter in something of that light. It always seemed to me that he was waiting for someone or something, waiting quietly and not impatiently as one waits for what one knows is sure to come at the appointed time.

Once I suggested something of the sort to him. He smiled, and into his

eyes there came a far-away look as though he were seeing a distant vision.

"Inspiration," he said softly, almost as though he were speaking to himself, "comes to men in different ways. In my case perhaps a woman will bring it."

"You are waiting for a woman then?" I asked.

He looked at me fixedly for a minute. Then he burst out laughing.

"I am waiting, you silly old jossler, for you to get out and let me dress for dinner."

Inspiration did come to him—brought by a woman. And such a woman! Had Crystal Hetherington had in her spirit a jot of the perfection that graced her body, the angels would have wept tears of envy. She was the most astoundingly beautiful creature I ever saw. There are no words to describe the wonderful sweep of line that enveloped her from head to toe, no phrases to do justice to her features, her hair, her colouring, her grace. She was far enough above the women in her set to be beyond comparison, yet the women in Crystal's set were noted throughout London for their beauty. She outshone them all as the sun outshines the lesser planets.

But in other respects—

In all of us, even the most disillusioned, there is something that rebels and cries out in pain each time we discover that the contents of a box do not equal the loveliness of the container. When I got to know Crystal Hetherington intimately and had peered under the shell of her surface perfections, I shuddered at what I saw there. Deceit, selfishness and a granite-like hardness terrible to behold. I was half in love with her in those days and my awakening from my romantic dreams of her hurt me more than I had thought it possible for anything to hurt me. I did what so many men before me have done. I ran away to seek forgetfulness and found that only poignant, painful memories lay at my journey's end.

After two years of making a fool of myself in almost every corner of the globe I returned to England. And, as

Fate so likes to order such things, about the first person I saw was Crystal herself. It was at my sister's house in Hampshire. When I came down for my coffee I found her sitting alone in the breakfast room. She greeted me without any particular enthusiasm, much as though she had seen me not ten minutes before. We talked of this and that for a little. Then she said something that caused me to lend an attentive ear to her chatter.

"I say, Tony, I've met the duckiest man—a friend of yours—Stephen Wainright, the painter."

I gave her a weak, vacant sort of smile. The question, "What does Stephen Wainright think of you?" was drumming at my brain.

She rattled on.

"He is a dear, isn't he?" She laughed. "So remarkably like—well, like himself and different from other men."

"I suppose he is in love with you as so many other foo—men have been?" I asked.

She lowered her wonderful eyes.

"I think he likes me," she answered demurely.

I laughed a little bitterly.

"And what does the estimable M. Perechon say about all this?"

M. Paul Perechon was a young Frenchman and a poet who had played a rather leading part in my own drama of disillusionment.

Crystal had the grace to blush. Then her features hardened and her eyes snapped angrily.

"Paul is becoming impossible," she said.

I murmured my regrets and changed the subject.

That afternoon I met Hetherington, Crystal's husband, on the links. While we were waiting at the first tee he sidled up to me and said:

"This chap, Wainright, we've been seeing lately—decent sort, what?"

"Very," I answered briefly.

"M-m—glad of that," he went on. "Seems a bit struck with Crystal. And I daresay she likes him a bit more than

the others. Man with a pretty wife has to keep his eyes open, you know. Can't have squalls or that sort of thing."

I looked up into the honest, open countenance of the big Yorkshireman. I noted the square, determined chin and I thought that I would not like to be in Crystal's shoes—or the man's either—if there ever should be "squalls or that sort of thing."

The next day I traveled up to London. In the afternoon at that delightful hour just after the light has gone for a painter and he falls into that quiet mood that encourages confidences, I went to see Wainright. I found him greatly changed. The almost careless indifference to the wagging world which had been characteristic of him was gone. In its place was an enthusiasm for life, a sort of superabundant vitality dynamic and extraordinary. He was, as the French have it, *very exalté*.

He greeted me cordially and made me tremendously at home. He showed a keen interest in where I'd been. But all the time it seemed to me that only part of the man was really attentive to me. The rest of him was away somewhere busy with thoughts, with visions that brought a sparkle to the eyes and a tender smile to the lips.

At length I said:

"Did you know that your friend, Mrs. Hetherington, was staying with my sister down at Stonewald?"

Like a well trained horse brought to an unfamiliar jump, he shied ever so slightly.

"Yes, I had heard," he answered in a tone he tried desperately to keep casual. Then he hurried on. "It must be wonderful down there now?"

But once I had started, I would not let Crystal creep out of our conversation.

"Wonderful, yes. And a glorious setting for Crystal Hetherington's beauty."

Wainright forgot himself.

"Lord, man, isn't she divine?" he exclaimed.

"Many men have found her so," I said drily. "Her husband among them."

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He gave me a quick, sharp look.

"Her husband? What do you mean by that?"

I shrugged my shoulders.

He rose and began to pace up and down the studio. I remained by the fire, smoking contemplatively.

Suddenly he stopped before me.

"See here, Tony," he said. "If you want to get at anything, out with the question, direct. This roundabout method doesn't suit you."

I laughed as lightly as I could.

"Perhaps I'm trying to get at what you think of Crystal Hetherington."

He was silent, looking fixedly into the fire. Then:

"What do I think of Crystal Hetherington? Well, why shouldn't I tell you? I am not ashamed of it. I love her, Tony. I love her more, I think, than man ever loved woman before."

I didn't quite know what to say. So I said what so many say under like circumstances—the fool thing.

"The woman bringing the inspiration, eh?"

Immediately Wainright lost his mood of quite not unbecoming seriousness. He became like a boy eager to display new treasure.

"See here," he cried, "I'll show you about that."

He snapped on a row of hooded lights on the side wall and dragged forth a number of canvases which he set in a row.

"There, Tony! Is that work damned good—or isn't it?"

Whatever gifts Crystal had brought to other men—and just then I could not imagine her bringing anything but vain regrets—to Stephen Wainright she had brought inspiration. The pictures were, as he had expressed it, damned good. There was power in them and a strange haunting beauty. In one especially he had managed to portray the features of a certain actor, a vain, petty fellow and bring out all there was to his character, at the same time so managing his line, his colour, his arrangement, that the thing was a true work of art. Right



then I knew that as a portrait painter Stephen Wainright was made.

Very shortly afterward the art world confirmed my judgment. Mallory, the art critic of the *Times*, persuaded Wainright to give a show at one of the Regent Street galleries. It was a huge success. Every writer, whether he knew anything about his subject or not, filled his columns with praise of the work. And then society, taking its cue as it always does, flocked to the artist's door and showered him with commissions. It became the thing in London to have oneself done by Wainright as the season before it had been the thing to be seen patronizing the Piccadilly night clubs.

Before I left Wainright that night when he showed me his pictures he spoke of Crystal Hetherington again.

"Tony, old man," he said, putting an arm affectionately around my shoulder, "I don't want you to go away thinking that—that what I told you tonight in any way resembles those ugly liaisons that happen so often. It's something quite different—something big, elemental, that is no more to be denied than—well, than death." He finished lamely.

I had it on the tip of my tongue to ask him what he hoped would be the outcome of it all. But I refrained. Instead I gripped his hand and said:

"You know, Stephen, that I for one could never misjudge you. Rest your mind easy on that score."

Then I left him.

## II

I MADE it my business to keep myself informed as to the way his relations with Crystal developed. I did this, not from motives of prying curiosity, but because I was somehow driven to it by a feeling lurking in my heart that a time would come when I would be called upon to protect Wainright from unhappiness. A silly notion? I grant it, but it was there and it persisted.

It is only the love of a simple woman that can be plumbed for its depth. With

a complex, naturally secretive woman such as Crystal, I doubt that any man—or woman, for that matter—could measure her emotion or pass judgment on its value. Personally I believe that Crystal Hetherington cared for Wainright as greatly as a nature such as hers would permit. But I may be mistaken. Perhaps her feeling for him was not love at all, only a sex attraction, episodic and superficial. Be that as it may, I know that almost from the beginning she was able at least to simulate a feeling that satisfied Wainright. It raised his spirit into realms of delight we lesser mortals never can hope to approach.

I feel sure that she cared enough about the intensity of his feeling, and was informed enough in the ways of love to know, as a witty Frenchman puts it, to feed it with denials. Often she had tea with him at his studio. How many times did I go there at nightfall and seeing her motor outside, turn away, a prey to mixed feelings?

I do not know what passed between them at these meetings. A kiss, a touching of the hands, promises of never-ending emotion? Nothing more, certainly. Had there been, I am convinced that I would have guessed it from a change in Wainright's manner. His moods remained exalted; there was about him always that atmosphere of ecstatic reaching out common to all sorts of ungratified desires.

A season passed and a summer. Then when the autumn days fell on London and the wisps of brown fog floated lazily across the housetops, evil times came to Crystal Hetherington.

The charming Paul Perechon of whom I have spoken was the instigator. Quite without any warning another side of his extraordinary nature asserted itself. From being more or less the lap-dog sort of lover, he became astoundingly forceful. He demanded what he was pleased to call his "rights." No longer did he take Crystal's rebuffs and denials lying down, as it were. On the contrary he stood before her mercilessly belligerent.

Jealousy, perhaps, brought about this

startling metamorphosis. I don't know and it doesn't matter. The essential fact was that his demands, his ravings could not be dismissed lightly. The man had power and threatened to use it. There were letters, and he threatened to send them either to Crystal's husband or to let them fall into the hands of the editors of one of the journals that grow fat on scandal and blackmail.

It was a disagreeable afternoon in November when Crystal sent for me. Rain was falling and the whole town had the bedraggled, sordid aspect of a drunken woman in Whitechapel. As my taxi scurried and slid through the streets my mood took on the color of the day.

Nor was its hue lightened when the servant ushered me into Crystal's boudoir. I found her lying on a *chaise longue*, her back to the windows over which heavy curtains had been pulled. At her side was a tiny table weighted down with bottles of cologne, smelling salts and other paraphernalia of the sick room.

She greeted me languidly and motioned me to a chair beside her.

"Tony," she said, "I just can't stand this sort of thing any longer."

"Perechon?" I asked.

She nodded.

"He has become terrible. Last night at the Claybornes' he took me into the conservatory and threatened me. I wrote him some silly letters once—and he has given me until tomorrow night to agree to his demands or—"

"Were the letters so bad, then?"

"No. I give you my word that they meant really nothing when I wrote them. But to someone else—my husband— Oh, you know how differently things seem. And the beast will do as he says, Tony. I think he's a little mad. I—I couldn't stand it—Hetherington's rage—the scandal—I couldn't stand it."

"Do you care to tell what Perechon wants?"

"He wants me to go away with him. Fancy that! Tony, you've got to help me."

I raised my eyebrows.

"I?" I said.

She stretched out her hand.

"You liked me a little, once, Tony. I thought you might be my friend now."

I made an impatient gesture.

"It's not that," I said. "But what in Heaven's name can I do?"

She raised herself on her elbow.

"Go to him," she cried eagerly. "Go to Perechon and try to beg me off. Offer him something—anything. But, Tony, try to save me!"

I left her lying as I had found her, staring pathetically after me. As I drove away my heart was filled with pity for her.

There is no need for me to give in detail my interview with Perechon. It was what I expected it would be—quite unsuccessful. I too thought the man was a little mad. He was too merciless, too firm in his resolution.

It was with a heavy heart that I entered Crystal's boudoir the second time that day. There was no need for me to say anything. She read in my eyes the result of my mission. She fell back and lay there motionless and silent for a long, long time. Then very quietly she spoke.

"I've thought it all out, Tony. After you had gone I realized that I had sent you on a fool's errand. If I couldn't move Perechon, you couldn't. He's—"

She threw up her hands in a hopeless gesture. She went on.

"So there's nothing for me to do but to get out and make the best of it. I can't be here when Perechon strikes. I'm too much of a coward. I'm off tonight."

"Where are you going?"

"How do I know? To Paris first, probably. After that—"

She shrugged her shoulders indifferently.

"But Crystal—"

And I did my best to persuade her to stay and face the music. But even, as I spoke I realized the futility of my arguments. Also I realized their weakness. I had just come from Perechon and knew that he would do as he threatened. Also I knew Hetherington and I imagined that I knew what he would

do—if ever Crystal's letters to another man fell into his hands.

She broke in on my flow of words.

"It's really no use, Tony," she said. "My mind is quite made up."

I sat silent for several moments, wondering what the future had in store for this butterfly woman. The vision that passed across my mind was not pleasant. Hotels—*pensions*—here and there and everywhere on the Continent. Association with tourists and the *déclassé*. Eventually an old age bereft of—

Suddenly I had an inspiration. I stammered the words to convey it to my companion.

"I say, Crystal—I you know—Damn it all, Crystal, why not let me go with you?"

She smiled at me and taking my hand patted it gently.

"That's decent of you, Tony. But no—thanks. I don't think we'd make a go of it, quite. With someone else—"

She broke off and fell into a fit of abstraction. Then she caught at my hand almost frenziedly.

"But, Tony, there is something you could do for me. There is a man we both know who has said all sorts of things to me—nice things. If you cared to drop him a hint that I am leaving from Paddington on the nine-fifteen tonight, I should not be—well—ungrateful."

I do not know what I would have said in answer to this. Fortunately I was spared the necessity. Hetherington came in and a few moments later I made my adieux. As I bent over Crystal's hand she murmured softly—

"You won't forget, Tony?"

I nodded and left her.

### III

DURING my long ride from Mayfair to Wainright's studio in St. John's Wood I was lost in a haze of speculation. I knew perfectly what Wainright would do when he heard my news. He loved Crystal and he would pack his things and be off in a jiffy. What would happen after that? Where would they

go? Would Hetherington get a divorce and let them marry? Then a tiny wave of something like jealousy swept over me. I envied Wainright the chance I was taking to him. But that passed. My common sense asserted itself. I, middle-aged, uneager for romantic adventure, was no fit companion for a young and beautiful woman intent on throwing her cap over the windmill. Crystal had been right—we shouldn't have made a go of it.

The taxi driver called over his shoulder.

"Here we are, sir," and I saw that we were before Wainright's door.

I found him sitting in the studio, lost in the depths of an easy chair. In front of him on an easel was a picture.

It was a portrait of Crystal that he had been working on for several weeks. The afternoon light beating down through the great skylight brought out every detail of it with cameo-like distinctness.

I caught my breath as I looked at it. It was wonderful. There looking at me out of the canvas was Crystal—the real Crystal. You know the picture—it hangs now in the Moreland galleries and by its power dwarfs every other picture in the room. A young woman standing in an indolent pose, her back against a Chinese screen elaborately embroidered. At first you say to yourself, "How beautiful." Then you look again and forget her beauty in your interest in the human document spread out before you—a document wonderfully embellished with marvelous line and superb colour that seems only to accentuate its cruel truth. Crystal is there, but it is not the Crystal that men loved and raved over. It is the hard, spoiled, essentially selfish Crystal that her God must have looked down on and pitied. In this, his greatest work, Wainright had consciously put his best as a painter and unconsciously let his genius for "seeing the thing as it was" have complete expression.

I looked down into his face, a little afraid of what I should find there. I involuntarily sighed with relief when I

saw that his love for the woman had blinded him to all save her physical beauty. Although it was his hand that had set it down, he obviously had no realization of the truth he had portrayed.

He smiled serenely.

"You like it?" he asked.

I nodded and answered him without really understanding his question or my reply. At that moment I was far from able to discuss the merits of Crystal's picture. For suddenly I had seen clearly. The sight of that canvas had brought me an answer to a question I had been asking myself subconsciously ever since I had left Crystal's boudoir a half hour before. Could I really tell him that she was going to bolt and wanted him to join her?

As I looked at that canvas I realized with an awful certainty that were I to tell him and he to go away with her a day would come when he would know consciously about her what now he knew only subconsciously. And I knew that when that day came he would not be able, as other men might, to put her aside and go about his own affairs. His nature would never let him. He was the sort of man who loves but once, and that once for eternity. No, he would cling to her, knowing her unworthiness yet still loving her and perhaps hating himself because he could not kill his passion. And because he would be unhappy his wonderful gift of painting would leave him and there would be nothing in life.

I turned to him.

"Stephen," I began. Even then the die was not cast. Then:

"Get into your things and come along to the club for dinner."

"Right," he said indolently, and went to his bedroom to dress.

After dinner I persuaded him to accompany me to one of the Halls. I don't remember which one nor a single act played out on the boards before us.

I was too far lost in my thoughts to be more than half aware of what was going on about me. It was only by a great effort of will that I kept my manner usual enough that Wainright would not notice a difference in me and probe me for a reason.

It was almost midnight when our taxi deposited us at Wainright's door again. He insisted that I go in with him for a drink and a cigar.

In the hallway his housekeeper handed him a note.

"A messenger brought it about an hour ago, sir," she said.

He tore it open. As he read its contents his face went a terrible chalky white. He staggered and caught at my shoulder for support.

"Crystal—Mrs. Hetherington—there's been a frightful accident, a man shot her at Paddington—she's in the hospital. She has asked for me."

He pulled himself together and dashed from the house.

Beside the fire in the studio I sat and waited for his return. God! How the seconds, minutes, hours dragged! I was beyond thinking, beyond feeling, almost. I just sat there, waiting—waiting—

The dawn stole in at the window and Wainright returned. He strode into the studio.

"Crystal—how is she?" I cried.

"Dead," he answered sullenly.

Then he turned on me savagely.

"She spoke to me before she went out," he said. "She told me that she had sent me a message by you—she told me the message. Tony—why in God's name didn't you—tell me—why didn't you deliver it?"

"Listen, Stephen," I began. Then I saw how futile any explanation of mine would be—would ever be. I rose slowly and like a whipped cur left the room. I never saw my friend Stephen Wainright again.





# Coffee

*By L. L. Carey*

WE sit and sip cup after cup of coffee, while the five fiddlers around the piano drag their bows wearily over the strings, and through the yellow room the tunes come twining—tunes some wastrel wove out of the ruin of his life, some loveless sensitive blighted with that blight more withering than disease, the love of beauty, the desire of creation. Chinese with enigmatic faces idle back and forth, back and forth, with noiseless tread upon the thick green carpet; the odour of Oriental cooking wafts from the steaming pots upon their trays. A thin girl that took our coats leans on the wall beside her racks, and smiles upon us with a vague and melancholy smile, but does not see us. With many cigarettes our nerves are wracked. Our coffee is an oily opiate, queasy sweet, that hurries our hearts; and strange and mournful fantasies reel through our brains. . .

You were saying, "Still are their kingdoms to be won and fame still braids her garlands. Women madden for love, and gold lies rotting under the dust of Gothic vaults; and buried in forgotten pyramids wine from the cellars of Rhodopis dreams in its old Greek vases, where black Bacchantes revel in a red night. In matted tropic jungles, by seas that gleam beneath a yellow sun old empires are decaying; the cafés in Montmartre swirl with lights and

swim with gayety; along the Nevsky Prospekt the passionate northern girls press against the blood-stained garments of men that finger guns still hot with murder; and in Seville the moon above the myrtles . . ."

But I was thinking of a distant world so large that, gazing out across its seas, one sees phantasmal waves come in as down a slope from dizzy heights of heaven, in the blue twilight of its brightest noon; waves of unearthly luster, touched by winds that bring intoxicating fragrances; and up and down the long and silent sands the people of a madman's nightmare walk with arms entwined; and ghostly cadences drift through the dusk from breathless distances, and arabesques of melody from flutes more clear than straight.

The aromatic smoke of our cigarettes stings in our eyes and burns our throats and hurts our lungs with every inhalation. Our coffee has grown sweet as sickly poisons, and our brains whirl insanely, our breath is gasping, and in our temples and our wrists our pulses throb. Chinese with cryptic eyes of black steal back and forth, back and forth, without a sound beneath their high-piled trays, from which exudes a sluggish aroma of Oriental cooking. We sit and sip cup after cup of coffee, and strange and mournful fantasies glide through our brains. . .



# Not Without Dust and Heat

*By Richmond Brooks Barrett*

I

THE Reverend Eric Manson pursed up his lips and, lifting his fine brows in gentle warning, consulted his watch.

"I can give you just ten minutes, Willard," he announced in a declamatory tone; his ringing voice, even in most casual utterances, possessed all the dignity and breadth and deliberate rhythm of polished oratory. Whatever he said seemed a quotation from the King James Bible. If he reprimanded the parlour-maid for lack of thoroughness in dusting, his resonant periods rolled out like Messianic prophecies of doom.

"I have had the motor called for seven-forty, Willard," he now reminded his son. "Your mother and I couldn't possibly be late for one of Mr. Brand's dinners, you know. Mr. Brand is a punctual man; he would be annoyed."

Manson smiled in paternal indulgence, then, fixing his eyes keenly on the youth's scraggy, bluish chin, breathed out with sudden impatience:

"See here, Willard—you haven't shaved today. A fellow of your age has quite enough beard to warrant a daily use of the razor. It's time you got over such slovenly habits."

As he spoke, he ran a fine white hand over his own face, through the firm pink gloss of which not a single bristle obtruded. Though he had limited the session to ten minutes, the Reverend Eric was not averse to a digression of some length on the vital question of personal appearance.

His son, however, showed himself stubbornly determined against being side-tracked. The older man had paused to take a last look at himself in the

mirror of his bathroom door. He strove to give the occupation a careless, cursory value, but had become straightway so absorbed as to neglect following up his topic eloquently. He patted his face again with luxurious satisfaction, and, lowering his head an inch or two, examined his sleekly brushed hair.

Willard threw himself down on the bed and sprawled there, deliberately ignoring the impatient glance his father tossed at him.

"Sorry to break in on you like this, father," he remarked, cutting short the other's perusal of his image. "The trouble is, it's confoundedly hard to get you alone—away from Beverley."

"Ah!" Manson turned from his reflection and faced Willard. "You want to talk to me about Beverley?"

This fact apparently failed to arouse the father to the point of enthusiasm. He laid a hand on his son's shoulder and protested:

"Come now, my boy. Please get off that bed. There are plenty of comfortable chairs about."

"Oh—all right!" Willard was good-naturedly unconcerned. He dropped into the nearest chair, stretched out his long legs and resumed his discourse. "We've got about four minutes left, so I'll speak right out. Beverley's on the verge of flunking, you know. Has he told you yet?"

There was a silence while the Reverend Eric, his head critically on one side, smoothed out the creases on the bed. He straightened up at length and brushed two or three specks of lint off his coat before he returned:

"No—he hasn't told me. Perhaps he intends to study a bit during the holidays and get himself prepared for the

mid-year tests. He doesn't seem worried. I'm afraid you're an alarmist, Willard."

"No—he never worries." The youth was laconic. "You know what they say about water off a duck's back. Beverley doesn't care a"—catching a sudden dilation of his father's eyes, he finished with a winning half-smile—"a rap."

Willard hadn't forgotten the occasion when Mr. Manson had remarked, in the presence of both his sons, that he really couldn't object to oaths so disarmingly spontaneous as Beverley's; but Willard's, alas, seemed deliberate and therefore smacked of affectation. The suspicion of affectation made the Reverend Eric's blood run cold. (This remark had been accompanied by a loving look at his fine hand with a cigarette becomingly placed between the first and second fingers.)

Willard now, by tactfully refraining from profanity, had forestalled an interruption. He pursued with gentle doggedness:

"I don't want to seem like a tale-bearer, father. I just wanted to warn you. Beverley's neglecting everything for his own good time. He *may* get into trouble some day. I thought it would be better—for both you and Bev—if I dropped a few hints. Then, if he *should* get into hot water, you wouldn't be entirely unprepared. Do you see? You might be hard on him—if you hadn't had any inkling."

The father's serenity was unruffled by these portents.

"Beverley has more common sense than you give him credit for, Willard," he dropped lightly. "I'm not the least bit afraid for him. And really, my boy, I'm not likely to forget the duty of a Christian father. I think there'll be no danger of my neglecting to temper justice with mercy."

The suave sweetness of these words was not without its sting. The implication was obvious: if either of the sons had sunk in the estimation of the father as a result of the brief conference, it was *not* Beverley.

"Is that all, Willard?" Manson's

gaze wandered to the door. "Your mother is probably waiting for me. We mustn't be late. Mr. Brand would be annoyed; I shouldn't like to do anything that might—er—arouse his ire. A charming man—but irascible."

Willard was obedient. He lounged to the door that his indulgent father was by now holding open for him.

"Good night, father. Sorry to bother you," he apologized.

"Not at all—not at all. Don't worry about Beverley. Good night, my boy."

They shook hands. Mr. Manson insisted on this sound English salutation on every possible occasion. When his boys returned home after a considerable absence or when they left his side for a protracted period, he took occasion to deal out to each a sacred charm against temptation in the form of an affectionate kiss. This practice, however, was too solemn for daily use; the handshake was considered more appropriate for minor hails and farewells.

They encountered Mrs. Manson at the head of the stairs. She smiled upon them, and, grasping Willard's untidy head between her hands, kissed him vigorously.

"Why were you two shut up together?" she asked.

Her husband shrugged carelessly.

"Something quite unimportant," he replied. He waved a graceful hand at Willard, who had slouched past them down the corridor on his way to his room. Then, bending to his wife with a confidential air, he murmured:

"Do talk to the boy, Nina. He's twenty; he ought to be shaving himself every morning—he really ought. He's so different from Beverley."

Mrs. Manson's smile glittered in the half-light.

"So different from *you*, Eric," she remarked. "That's what you mean, isn't it?"

"Well—perhaps." He was non-committal. Her words struck him as most subtle flattery. After all, it was pleasing to be reminded that his handsome wag of a son resembled him.

He stole a glance at her lustrous fur

wrap as they walked down the stairs. At moments like this, Manson felt himself blessed among men. He had lived virtuously and diplomatically; in his youth he had, with his mind fixed on the heights, walked unfalteringly onward along the steep path of service. He had toiled and sweated for the poor of New York, and, at the same time, he had tactfully bent a shapely and devoted leg to the rich. His charitable work had soon become a topic of conversation at well-appointed dinner-tables; the next step had been taken in short order—he had found himself an honoured guest at the houses that harboured those same dinner-tables. Then, within three years of each other, had come his two great rewards: he married Nina Wilks, a woman of some wealth and of unappeasable social ambition; and he was called, as rector, to perhaps the most fashionable parish in the country. So at twenty-seven he had already reached the dizzy height of his ambition.

His cup had simply overflowed at the birth of his twin sons. He and his equally far-seeing wife had forthwith leaped ahead in imagination to the time when the whole of Lenox would be a matrimonial hunting-ground for the fortunate twins, when the desirable maidens of the resort would be snared within the Reverend Eric's parish as in a net—at the mercy of the Manson boys.

And tonight he and his wife were dining with Tomlinson Brand. It would be a carefully chosen company, of course. Brand never entertained on a big, promiscuous scale. The one blot on Manson's radiant happiness was, ludicrously enough, the goading vision of Willard's unshaven chin. It gave him, somehow, a sense of impotence, an uncomfortable premonition as to the dreadful potentialities of a boy with such a tramp-like mien. The thought of Beverley, succeeding the untidy image of his brother, had a soothing effect. No danger from that quarter! A possible flunk? A remote chance of some quite harmless scrape? Absurdly trivial—compared with that execrable spikey chin!

## II

MR. BRAND's dinner was charming, of course. Manson basked in the warm scents of flowers and wine, feasted his eyes on the pure watery shafts of light raying out from the crystal vessels on the tables and from the diamonds of the hostess. Since Mrs. Brand could trace her lineage back to a remote past, it was her privilege to wear as many jewels as she could find room for. She was of ample proportions; tonight, as she twinkled and sparkled, she seemed to be vying with the great chandelier above her head.

Manson responded glowingly to the atmosphere, which might have appeared too dense, too heavy with the fumes of rich sauces and ripe vintages, if Mrs. Brand's diamonds hadn't somehow, like so many icicles, purified the air and given it a bracing rarity. Nothing could have convinced Manson that this ritualistic feast merely fed the sensual flesh. No, indeed! It was rather a spiritual tonic; it proved that the man who knew how could raise to a heavenly plane the satisfaction of one's craving for food.

"Ah—Mr. Manson!" Mrs. Brand suddenly remarked at a moment when Mr. Brand's sputtering diatribe against Lenox civic affairs had robbed him of breath.

Her interruptions never appeared a breach of etiquette. Some women cut off their husbands' eloquence in mid-career, as if with an abrupt pressure of a finger on the wind-pipe.

Mrs. Brand, however, always waited till Tomlinson's vocal machinery got stuck of itself. There was no need of interference on her part.

"Mr. Manson!" she repeated with a cordial smile, "I saw your son Beverley yesterday. He's extremely handsome."

The proud parent assumed a nonchalant air. "He's a healthy young specimen, certainly. He has a most remarkable resemblance to my maternal grandfather." By these words he apparently gave out a modest hint that, if one were seeking for a progenitor handsome



enough to claim a likeness to the boy, one must needs overlook the father. "Gilbert Stuart's portrait of my mother's father"—this rapidly, as if to get a boring fact out of the way—"Gilbert Stuart's portrait in my library might be Beverley himself in fancy dress. Most remarkable resemblance, really—"

Then for the first time he caught the absorbed round eyes of Mary Brand. She sat across the table from him. Her mouth was half open, her whole bearing bore witness to the fact that she was making a mighty effort to keep her poor brain from blurring before the last word on Beverley had been uttered. The Reverend Eric would have started visibly if he had not possessed perfect control over himself. Strange! Inexplicable! Why under the sun had he never thought before of this opaque-eyed, dull, dumpy girl, this only child of the Brands, this prospective inheritor of all their millions?

As he continued, for a brief space, to talk of Beverley to Mrs. Brand, Manson's thoughts were alertly busy. When the conversation shifted to another channel, he had already begun to plant the train that would in the end blow himself and his family straight up to the pinnacle where the Brands now lorded it alone.

### III

FORTIFIED by his staunch Anglican beliefs and by the conviction that really worth-while people were so constituted that they couldn't go under in the sea of life, Eric Manson was a singularly buoyant spirit. He had always felt that he could meet with a dauntless courage the gravest emergency. Like a true warrior of the Faith, he would ever possess the might to disperse the dark hosts of Midian.

On the day his sons returned to Yale after the Christmas holidays, Manson had as usual delivered a resonant discourse on the subject of youth's frailties and youth's strength. He made a point, on these occasions, of touching fervently upon his own struggles of stu-

dent days; he was careful to stress the fact of his own sore temptations, of his battles with the flesh. Manson was proud to remember that he'd been a hot young chap—a fellow who'd had in him the germs of evil as well as of good. His had been no cloistered virtue; his race had been run not without dust and heat. He liked to look at the handsome Beverley while he thundered out his warnings; it forced home to him with a certain sadness the renunciations that had been his at a time when he'd been just as good-looking, just as avid of pleasure as this son of his. Verily his strength must have been as the strength of ten!

Since the Brand dinner, Manson had felt somehow that Beverley was clad in proof. He'd never had any real fears for the boy, except during the polemical moments on the days of departure. Beverley was so triumphantly the worthwhile sort that he could be trusted in shaping his life. The knowledge that stupid Mary Brand was in love with him, that her parents were putting themselves out to be cordial, that Beverley himself was humorously aware of the situation—that had added the finishing touch of the father's sense of the young man's security. So, though he had talked to his sons as usual on their last day, he had felt positively as if the lecture were gratuitous.

Then, in less than three weeks, the blow had fallen.

One morning Willard had called his father on the telephone. The voice of the usually self-possessed boy came in spasmodic windy gusts. It was difficult to piece together the fragmentary bits of information into an understandable disclosure. There were many excited gasps between words. The father, in exasperation, made caustic comments, partly from sheer rage, partly in an attempt to frighten his son into coherence.

"Now Willard! Say that over again—*slowly—and—distinctly!*" yelled Manson at regular intervals. "You want me to come—to—New Haven?"

"Yes—right off—this minute. It's

awfully important. We can't explain—you know how it is—letters—you know. Bev feels rottenly about it all, he really does—" and the far-away voice would splutter out lengthy, convulsive apologies until it was thunderously interrupted.

"Has—Beverley—*flunked*?" the irate father at length boomed into the mouth-piece.

"He feels rottenly—he really does!" came the ludicrous response.

Manson could stand no more.

"Expect me—at *seven*—tonight!" he warned, and, without waiting to find out whether the message had sunk in, he slammed the receiver down.

His predominant feeling, as he stood there pondering the message, was relief that Tomlinson Brand's farewell dinner, before his departure for England, had taken place the night before. Had it been tonight, he would have found himself in a most disconcerting predicament.

In the boys' sitting-room at the dormitory that evening, Manson learned the truth of Beverley's sorry mix-up. For a time, he felt utterly crushed. The buoyancy had gone out of him; his spirit collapsed like a pricked toy-balloon. His sons, after their nervous greeting, had simply blurted things out.

To a man whose mind had been nurtured for twenty-five years by the robust truths of the Bible, whose voice had read out regularly the unblushing narratives of the Old Testament, a straightforward recital of facts should on this occasion have been welcome. As a matter of fact, he found Beverley's frankness distasteful. Perhaps he had already become aware that, to save his own sensitive skin and to preserve in his mind the theory of his son's unblemished integrity, it was going to be necessary to dodge behind a thick fog of sentimentality and look at things through this distorting veil. At any rate, he shrank from the words "road-house," "raid," and, most of all, from "girl" as it was pronounced by the erring boy. Surely this was not a time for stark realism. He could have visualized the

sordid scene vividly enough, in all conscience, with the help of a few guiding hints.

Beverley, however, had stated the facts. He and the lamentable "girl" had registered under a fictitious name, had been aroused at a quarter to one by the commotion the police were making downstairs and had climbed out of a window and escaped neatly—this statement being accompanied by a free sketch in the air to show how it was accomplished.

"It's the kind of mix-up that's *usually* hushed up right away," he had remarked. Whereupon he had relapsed into moody, ominous silence.

Manson got up abruptly from his chair and took a few turns in front of the fireplace. He had a vague apprehension that more disclosures were pending and he had determined to forestall them till he should at least have hit upon a consistent policy.

"This is indeed a sad confession, Beverley," he murmured as he walked. "I am glad to know, though, that you've told me of your own free will. The thing is over and done with; you are in no danger of discovery—and yet your conscience forces you to make a clean breast of the whole affair—to me. That, my boy, is a good sign."

As he said this, Manson felt a sudden relief. While talking against time, he had miraculously stumbled upon the way out of the labyrinth. By a swift inspiration, he had raised the tone of the conference, had introduced the pathetic quality of the boy's overmastering contrition. That, after all, was the note to be emphasized unflatteringly. Every word, every action, would be made to swell the evidence of that abject penitence. The whole business was straightway glorified in the father's eyes. It would be his duty to raise up and tend the abased sinner. He had got the matter under his control, had put it on the proper level. His spirit began to expand within him.

Beverley, sprawling gracefully on the window-seat with a great spread of arms and legs, had fixed an astounded gaze

upon his brother. A candid young soul, he had had no intention of posing as a stricken Samson. He was completely at a loss now. Moreover, he felt confusedly annoyed at the vision of himself kneeling with covered head in the theatrical limelight with which his father had of a sudden flooded the scene.

His problem was, as it happened, a sordidly practical one. He had wanted to get the thing off his chest with all speed. And now, before he'd reached the main point—there *had* been more disclosures pending—his father had subtly circumvented him. Beverley didn't want to be metamorphosed from a young scamp in a mess into a sickly, puling hero of sentimental romance. He sat up vigorously, blew a big snorting breath out of his nostrils and protested, "But look here! There's no sense—"

His father wheeled about and stopped short. Planting his legs wide apart, he faced Beverley with determination.

"You'd rather not be condoned in any respect, my boy," he broke in. "That, let me tell you, is also a good sign."

At this moment Willard, who at his father's back was stooping on the hearth and pottering with the log-fire, dropped to his knees and projecting his head forward so that Beverley might get a clear view of him through the triangular opening formed by the clergyman's legs, lifted a warning finger to his lips. This gesture, accompanied by a paining-taking wink, had its effect.

"What were you going to say, my boy?" the father pressed, laying a gentle hand on Beverley's shoulder.

His son indulged in an impatient shrug.

"Oh—nothing, I guess," he mumbled. Willard had risen from the hearth. He brushed his knees sedately and remarked:

"Bev's pretty much fagged, father. Don't you think you'd better go back to the hotel now? We can have another talk in the morning."

This struck the Reverend Eric as distinctly high-handed. Though he saw

the justice of it, he lingered on for a few moments with suave stubbornness, just to show Willard he was not to be brow-beaten.

"By the way," he dropped casually, "you weren't with your brother at this—er—this inn?"

His non-committal tone might have meant anything—even that he suspected Willard of being the actual culprit, of hiding behind an outlandishly self-sacrificing Beverley.

Beverley knocked any such idea on the head forthwith.

"Oh, tommyrot!" he scoffed. "He spent the whole of night before last cramming for a Calculus exam. *He's* no idiot!"

The Reverend Eric saw he had made a false step. He therefore finished out the evening delicately with well-put questions on the subject of mid-year tests. He took back with him to his hotel the news that Beverley had flunked everything. This did not disconcert him in the least; on the contrary, it had a decidedly pleasing effect. It crystallized his plans for the future.

So it was that the sons of the admirable clergyman, with Willard at the helm, joined their father in a queer conspiracy, the object of which was to distort the truth, pare it and snip it so that each element might contribute to the fundamental fact of repentance. Scared and unstrung by the mix-up, they had started out, on that first evening, to tell the whole truth. It had been Willard, the shrewder and cleverer of the two, who, at length recovering his usual offhand equanimity, had perceived the necessity of diplomacy toward the peculiarly constituted father. Had the latter been foiled in his neat plan, he might have turned ugly, and washed his hands of the whole affair. Convinced of his sons' opposition, of their determination to hamper him in his pretty remorse theory, wouldn't he have jumped aside and, letting them hang themselves, have obtained his reward in the sorrowful sympathy of his congregation? Willard's warning signal had come in the nick of time. Bev-

erley's principal disclosure was postponed till morning.

It was then given out by the resourceful Willard as a difficulty that had arisen *since* the evening conference. It had followed Beverley's wild remorse, not preceded it. That made all the difference. The Reverend Eric could now step forward magnanimously and pluck the brand from the burning—or, put more baldly, to expend so much hush-money for the sake of his son's reputation. He could not have done so—his principles would have forbidden any interference—if Beverley had not been purified by suffering before the time came for the father to take action. In the end, the whole affair resolved itself into an unrivalled example of teamwork—tacit, never for an instant acknowledged—between father and sons.

Willard had rushed into his father's hotel room at an early hour in the morning.

"Oh, I say!" he cried and without further warning blurted out his tidings. "The college authorities have got onto this road-house business; they've heard there were students in it and they're after the names. Expulsion for an example, you know! *Well*—this girl of Bev's is threatening to give his name—and everything—unless we pay her three hundred dollars. All the exam marks aren't in yet—do you see?—so unless we do something he'll be *kicked* out instead of just flunking decently. She's a hardened little sinner—got nothing to lose by coming out with the truth. It's an awful mess, father. Bev's desperate; but I've been telling him it was mighty lucky he made a clean breast of things last night. If he'd waited, you might have believed—almost *anything*."

The resourceful father had, during this recital, been delivering up a silent prayer of thanksgiving for the splendid outcome of the affair. As he had scrutinized the flushed, excited face of his son, a swift suspicion had popped into his mind. Could it be that this was the disclosure he had sensed as pending—last night? But like a disconcerting, saucy Jack-in-the-box the idea had

forthwith been crammed back into its proper place and the lid clapped-to over its head.

When the Reverend Eric spoke, a resonant sincerity was in his voice.

"I am most *happy*, Willard, that your brother should have proved his mettle at a moment when he thought himself safe. A real repentance, that! He deserves all the aid I can give him. Go back and tell him everything is all right, my boy."

The three hundred dollars paid that morning seemed to the Reverend Eric not vulgar hush-money but a tribute to a soul new-hatched through contrition.

"Your race has been run not without dust and heat, Beverley," he announced in organ-tones. "And you've reached the goal."

His sons exchanged humorous glances.

The allusion to dust and heat had brought vividly to their minds Beverley's sprint from the road-house in quest of a belated trolley-car back to New Haven.

#### IV

MR. AND MRS. MANSON and Beverley had spent the spring months in England with the Brands. It had been given out that Beverley's nerves had gone all to pieces from over-work; the anxious father, in order to nurse his son back to health abroad, had reluctantly left the parish in the hands of the assistant rector. He had communicated his plans to Tomlinson Brand, who, as Senior Warden of the church, must needs be consulted.

The pressing invitation to the estate in Surrey had been a delightful surprise, Manson affirmed broadcast. The visit had come to an equally delightful conclusion. The combined efforts of Mary's and Beverley's parents, not to mention the awkward advances of Mary herself, had in the end had their effect. It was as if, from the moment the Mansons entered the Surrey scene, Beverley had had on his shoulders four pairs of strong hands that pushed him toward the stolidly expectant girl. It was no



wonder he fetched up at last in her arms.

The Mansons returned to Lenox in May, the Brands on the first of June. The wedding was set for the twentieth of June. The Reverend Eric lived through the imminent festivities several times a day. He saw the exquisitely bedecked church, felt in his nostrils the combined odour of orange-blossoms and incense, pictured in his mind the sparkle of jewels in the Brand pew, conjured up the blossom-like procession of bridesmaids, the handsome figure of Beverley waiting at the chancel-rail. Mary's superb court-train strewn with pearls, the fragile, web-like bridal-veil that had been worn by her mother and by three grandmothers—these extravagant details had their place in his prophetic vision. As for Mary's face and bulky contours—these failed somehow to figure. More persistently in his mind's eye than any other portion of the pageant, however, was his own benign, dignified image. The flowing vestments, the half-sad, half-exalted smile! He heard his voice vibrating with emotion in the hushed assembly, as he gave into Mary Brand's keeping this new-hatched soul of his favourite son.

Just a fortnight before the ceremony so rhapsodically projected was to take place, Manson sat musing in his study. Willard, a figure seldom seen in this sanctum, lounged in a chair by the window. He had arrived, a few minutes before, from New Haven. Mrs. Manson and Beverley were out, so the Reverend Eric had indulgently admitted his son and had pretended to listen to the humdrum narrative of examinations honourably met. As a matter of fact, his thoughts were far away. The spiteful ring of the telephone recalled him to the busy present.

"Yes—this is he speaking. Ah—Mr. Brand. But—my dear sir! I really don't understand! But—but—"

Willard's brows were soon raised inquisitively. A torrential flood of choleric language was being wafted over the wire. The Reverend Eric's sensitive eardrums were evidently tortured by the sounds. A burning flush flooded his

face; desperately he strove to get in a protesting word here and there. The other's flow was not to be stemmed; like water in a thin-necked bottle, it continued to splutter, to burst its relentless way out, as if the telephone were an inadequate vessel for the proper emptying out of its mighty volume.

"What the devil?" Willard wondered.

"This—this is most unfortunate. Indeed, yes—in half an hour," cried Manson at last in agonized tones.

He remained tensely, expectantly still for a moment; then, convinced that the sudden stillness betokened Tomlinson Brand's withdrawal from the telephonic scene, he wearily let the receiver drop into its bracket. His hands shook and a convulsive tremour coursed over his mouth.

"This is terrible!" he suddenly cried and leaped out of his chair. "So unfair—so unforeseen. How could I ever explain my—my *true* motive?"

Willard was gently, good-humouredly receptive.

"What's the row, father?" he queried in coaxing tones.

"That unfortunate affair of Beverley's—in New Haven." Manson spoke under his breath, as if in self-communion. "How could it have seeped out? Through what quarter? Ah—I suppose the dispersal of students for the summer—I might have *known* this would happen. What will people think? It's the sort of thing that one can't explain adequately—"

"You mean—Brand knows?" Willard asked.

"He knows—he knows." Manson heaved a sigh of utter misery.

"You'd think a chap like him would approve of wild oats," Willard dropped philosophically. "He's still sowing his, I've heard, even if he is Senior Warden."

Manson scowled.

"This is no time for gossip," he snapped out impatiently. Nevertheless he deigned to comment on his son's remark. "It isn't the actual unfortunate affair that angers him. It's—so I gathered—the fact of my concealing the

truth, of inventing a nervous breakdown for the boy. But I don't *know*. He was so overwrought, he said so much and shouted so. I—was bewildered—

"Oh, I see," Willard remarked. "He thinks you put one over on him. Well—there's no denying it—you did, you know."

The nettled father refused to meet this. He threw himself into a chair and, covering his face with his hands, attempted to reason things out clearly.

"And I have to meet him—in half an hour," he moaned.

They were silent for a long moment.

It was Willard who broke the pause.

"Oh—it's not so *damned* serious," he drawled. "Just tell him *I* was the culprit. I'd rather like to get a reputation as a young dog. You can bluff it out; we're *all* clever at that."

He gave his father his whimsical half-smile. "If he comes back at you and asks why the thunder you took Bev away, just say you thought my influence was a bad one." He shrugged. "It's simple enough."

With a delightful chuckle and a yawn, he got up from his chair. In his quiet, inoffensive way he was enjoying the situation. He knew to the full the bitterness, for his majestically superior father, of taking any tip from him. It would be an intolerable humiliation. That his casual hint, however, would be avidly seized upon he hadn't a doubt. His good-natured, mild and satirical spirit found a subtly satisfying quality in this new rôle of indulgent guide to a perplexed parent.

The Reverend Eric sat up quite straight in his chair, his eyes blazing.

"Kindly leave the room, Willard," he ordered with superb hauteur. "I didn't ask you for advice. I don't wish to hear your underhanded schemes. Give me credit, please, for a little Christian decency."

"Beg pardon." Willard was sweetly unruffled. "I'd think it over, though, if I were you—really."

With that admonition he took himself off at an easy lope.

An hour later, the Reverend Eric

Manson drove up to his door in one of the Brand limousines. He had never looked more suave, more splendidly self-possessed than at this moment. The strains of nuptial music were once more in his ears. He had pondered the words of the disconcerting Willard during his walk to Tomlinson's lair, and swiftly a suspicion that made all easy had stirred in his fertile brain. Was it not conceivable that the boy had, after all, simply taken occasion to hint circuitously that in very fact the guilt of the insufferable affair in New Haven *did* lie at his door? Rather than ruin Beverley's life, hadn't Willard—perhaps—dropped a clue; since he was a sly, untrustworthy fellow, it would have been beyond him to make an open confession. Now—wasn't this plausible? Wasn't it indeed *probable*?

The perplexed clergyman had had little difficulty in convincing himself that there was enough evidence to justify his acting as if on proved facts. Far from taking a dishonorable tip, he had ferreted out the truth underlying the wily hint—the truth that had compelled him, in honour, to speak to Brand in the very words Willard had used in the study.

After dismissing the Brand limousine, Manson calmly crossed the front lawn to the modest terrace of his home. Willard, in a swing-chair, was smoking a cigarette and humming sleepily to himself.

"Willard!" The father's voice had all the old ring of superiority. "I want you to know that I told Tomlinson Brand the *entire truth*. I—er—made him see what my motives were—during my New Haven visit. He is a reasonable man—if somewhat irascible on the surface. The affair is closed. Your mother and Beverley need never know of it. I rely on you to keep quiet."

Willard's smile was one of filial deference—with just a suggestion of the enigmatic.

"Of course I'll never say a word about it, father," he promised.

The Reverend Eric drew himself up to his full height.

"Now, then, Willard, you're to march

right upstairs and shave that untidy chin of yours. And don't force me to make that request again. I have more important things to think about than keeping a grown man tidy."

"Sorry, father." Willard jumped up obediently, and, with his smile broadening uncontrollably to one of impish glee, he bounded through the French window into the house.



## Crepuscular

By Frank Morton

*IMMUTABLE* Love stands. We may not flee  
 From his behests, nor shall we 'scape the flame  
 Of his fierce wrath if we revolt. Sin, shame,  
 Joy, fear, and rapture mark his empery;  
 Delight stands dimpling ever at his knee.  
 Strong are his ardours that no use can tame.  
 Mercy died in him even as he came  
 Rose to the rosy breast of Cythera, she

The mother of gods and men. And yet . . . and yet,  
 How well we love thee, Love! How we adore  
 Thy terrible ravenous munificence! . . .  
 For on a night we saw thine eyelids wet  
 With timid grateful tears as never before  
 And knew the grace of passion outleaping sense.



**E**TERNITY is the automatic piano that keeps on playing after Time, the dancer, is tired.



**T**HE difference between a man's sweetheart and his wife is about seven dollars a meal.



# La Cloche perdue

By Marguerite Berthet

C'est la cloche Mathurine.  
Si longtemps sonna matines !  
Au bois s'en fut un matin,  
Et jamais ne s'en revint. . . .

**J**E vous laisse à penser la déception des petits gâs, attendant, le nez en l'air, le retour des cloches, sur la place du village. Déjà, le carillon avait commencé, et l'on reconnaissait les voix claires, fêlées ou grognonnantes : "Entends-tu ! C'est la Martine à Saint-Martin-du-Haut ; c'est la Louison, la Javotte . . ." Mais, quant à la Mathurine, onques on ne l'entendit plus ; et le clocher resta veuf de sa cloche, avec ses apprentis enchevêtrés, vrai domaine d'hirondelles.

Oh ! comme on la pleura !

C'est qu'on avait eu bien de la peine à l'avoir. On était pauvre au village ; mais que faire d'un clocher sans cloche ? Enfin, on avait eu une idée : rassembler en un tas les vieux chandeliers des grand'mères et les vieux boutons de cuivre des grand-pères, qui avaient presque tous été à la guerre, et aussi les gros sous d'autrefois que la charrue déterre, ça et là, et surtout, surtout, les vieilles clochettes et campênes hors d'usage, dont on n'entend vraiment plus assez le tinton, quand les troupeaux s'écartent du pâturage. Cela dura longtemps. Enfin, le tas fut déclaré assez gros, et, sans doute, enflé du contenu de quelque has de laine généreux, partit à la fonderie pour en revenir sous la forme d'une belle cloche neuve, sonnante, tintante et digdonnante, avec une allure de jeunesse qui donnait du cœur à l'ouvrage.

Ah ! qu'elle en avait sonné de baptêmes, de noces, et d'enterrements ! Sans

grande différence, d'ailleurs, elle sonnait la joie et la vie : "Alleluia, un nouveau petit gas ; deux bons poings bientôt pour guider la charrue. Gai ! gai ! Marions-nous ! A deux, l'ouvrage se fait mieux. Requiem, voilà le père Jean qui s'est endormi ; il a assez travaillé, il se repose sur sa bonne terre ; la terre est douce, elle refleurit ; travaillez, mes enfants, vous vous reposerez à votre tour."

Et la voix dominait la vallée. De très loin, dans les champs, ceux des autres villages l'entendaient : "C'est la Mathurine, écoutez ; Déjà midi, l'heure de la 'mèrande.' A la soupe, les faneurs !" La Mathurine sonnait, dindronnait tous tous les événements du village : elle appelait au feu comme à la prière, aux armes comme à l'affouage, à la corvée de route comme à la fête patronale.

Avec la même bonne grâce, elle sonna les changements de régime. Il y eut des rois, des empereurs, des présidents de République, des Dix, et des Trente, des Consuls et des Triumvirs. Mathurine sonnait, sonnait, avec la même sérénité joyeuse, un peu railleuse, mais si joviale, si bon enfant, qu'on ne pouvait lui en vouloir de n'avoir point d'opinion.

Malgré les apparences, la Mathurine s'ennuyait terriblement dans son clocher. Elle se sentait faite pour danser, chanter et se trémousser : les événements sont rares au village, et, entre deux sonneries, la vie dans un clocher n'est pas gaie, sans de moindre bourdon pour vous tenir compagnie. Ce qu'elle voyait par la lucarne n'était pas fait pour l'inviter à rester tranquille. C'étaient les prés et les bois, où défilaient les troupeaux, le matin, la Noiraude en tête, secouant fièrement sa campène. Ils s'en



allaient loin, loin, derrière la montagne bleue qui bouchait l'horizon, et longtemps, longtemps, on entendait le joyeux carillon de leurs clochettes. Sans doute, la Mathurine avait gardé dans son âme de cloche un peu de l'âme de ses aïeules les campênes, car elle ne pouvait entendre cette aubade sans tressaillir, et, le soir, quand les troupeaux dévalaient vers l'abreuvoir, la Mathurine sonnait et dansait toute seule: "Ah! gémissait-elle, être simple campène au cou de quelque Noiraude et courir le pays! Voir ce qui se passe là-bas dans le bois, derrière la montagne bleue!" Mais quelle Noiraude serait de taille à porter la cloche du clocher?

La Mathurine, comme vous pensez, avec son humeur voyageuse, attendait avec impatience le temps où les cloches s'en vont à Rome. Mais, à chaque fois, se voyage était une déception. Il fallait aller si vite, sous la garde de l'ange des cloches, qui ne badinait pas et vous ramenait dans les sentiers battus. "Et houp! houp! les cloches!" Et elles étaient si nombreuses, cloches de ville pimpantes et faraudes, cloches de village papotantes et jasantes. Elles se connaissaient, se racontaient leurs petites affaires, dédaignant un peu la Mathurine qui n'était pas des plus grosses. Comment rien voir du pays?

Une fois, pourtant, grâce à sa taille, elle parvint à se dissimuler entre le gros bourdon Nicolas et la grande Guillemine du bourg; et elle s'enfuit à la nuit sans être aperçue;—oh! un petit crochet seulement pour voir ce qu'il y avait dans le bois, derrière la montagne bleue."

Il y avait dans le bois de bien jolies choses. Déjà, les cloches blanches des anémones, et encore quelque cloche à bord pointé de vert de nivéoles attardées, et le carillon des scilles, et les campênes jaunes des jonquilles au bord de l'eau. Ah! comme cela sentait bon le printemps et la vie! . . .

Mais les chemins sont difficiles dans le

bois,—et voilà Mathurine perdue . . .

En ce moment passa, tirant sur sa corde, une vache longue efflanquée, et si grande que la Mathurine pouvait passer pour mignonnette auprès d'elle. Elle tirait sur sa corde d'un air si décidé qu'on voyait bien que c'était elle qui conduisait son maître. A la vue de la cloche, elle baissa le nez, renâcla, puis meugla:

—Eh! Maître, voyez donc la jolie cloche à me mettre au cou!

—C'est, ma foi, vrai, dit le Maître qui accourait tout essoufflé, aussi grand, aussi maigre en proportion que sa vache. Et, en deux temps, il saisit deux jeunes bouleaux, les tordit en corde, et suspendit la cloche au cou de sa bête.

—Comme ça, ajouta-t-il, ma vieille, tu pourras vagabonder; je saurai toujours te reprendre.

Mathurine fut bien contente: enfin! elle allait danser et chanter, et voir du pays. "Adieu les cloches de clochers, sonnait-elle, adieu les clochers aux cloches!"

Mais elle eut le temps de déchanter.

Par monts et par vaux, par bois et fondrières, sans trêve ni repos, la Vache Enragée traîne son maître le Bonhomme Misère, et la pauvre Mathurine, secouée, ballottée maintenant, demande grâce, hors d'haleine, la voix fêlée. La Vache Enragée jamais ne s'arrête, car elle est ensorcelée. Tout le monde en a goûté; mais plus on en mange, plus elle grandit. L'herbe sèche où elle a brouté, et elle donne, au lieu de lait, grêle, grésil et grésillon.

Entendez-vous, aux approches de Pâques, le drindron de la cloche fêlée, le galop endiablé de la vache? Son souffle fait plier les arbres, son meuglement fait trembler les clochers; c'est la Vache Enragée qui passe: grêle et misère ne sont pas loin.

C'est la cloche Mathurine:  
Jamais du bois ne revint.



# Dramatic Criticism in America

By George Jean Nathan

## I

**D**RAMATIC criticism, at its best, is the adventure of an intelligence among emotions. The chief end of drama is the enkindling of emotions; the chief end of dramatic criticism is to rush into the burning building and rescue the metaphysical weaklings who are wont to be overcome by the first faint whiffs of smoke.

Dramatic criticism, in its common run, fails by virtue of its confusion of unschooled emotion with experienced emotion. A dramatic critic who has never been kissed may properly appreciate the readily assimilable glories of "Romeo and Juliet," but it is doubtful that he will be able properly to appreciate the somewhat more evasive splendours of "Anatol". The capability of a judge does not, of course, depend upon his having himself once been in jail, nor does the capability of a critic depend upon his having personally once experienced the emotions of the *dramatis persona*, but that critic is nevertheless the most competent whose emotions the *dramatis persona* do not so much anticipatorily stir up as recollectively soothe.

All criticism is more or less a statement in terms of the present of what one has viewed of the past through a delicate, modern reducing-glass. Intelligence is made up, in large part, of dead emotions; ignorance, of emotions that have lived on, deaf and dumb and crippled, but ever smiling. The general admission that a dramatic critic must be experienced in drama, literature, acting and theories of production but not necessarily in emotions is somewhat diffi-

cult of digestion. Such a critic may conceivably comprehend much of Sheridan, Molière, Bernhardt and Yevreynoff, but a hundred searching and admirable things like the beginning of "Anatol," the middle of "Lonely Lives" and the end of "The Case of Rebellious Susan" must inevitably be without his ken, and baffle his efforts at sound penetration. I do not here posture myself as one magnificently privy to all the mysteries, but rather as one who, failing perhaps to be on very intimate terms with them, detects and laments the deficiencies that confound him. Experience, goeth the saw, is a wise master. But it is, for the critic, an even wiser slave. A critic on the Marseilles *Petits Pois* may critically admire "La Dernière Nuit de Don Juan," but it takes an Anatole France critically to understand it.

The superficial quality of American emotions, sociological and æsthetic, enjoyed by the great majority of American critics, operates extensively against profundity in American criticism—in that of literature and music no less than that of drama. American emotions, speaking in the mass, where they are not the fixed and obvious emotions ingenerate in most countries—such as love of home, family and country, and so on—are one-syllable emotions, primary-colour emotions. The polysyllabic and pastel emotions are looked on as dubious, even degenerate. No man, for example, who, though absolutely faithful to his wife, confessed openly that he had winked an eye at a ballet girl could conceivably be elected to membership in the Union League Club. The man who, after a cocktail, indiscreetly gave away the news that he had felt a tear

of joy in his eye when he heard the minuet of Mozart's G minor symphony or a tear of sadness when he looked upon Corot's "La Solitude," would be promptly set down by the other members of the golf club as a dipsomaniac who was doubtless taking hop on the side. If a member of the Y. M. C. A. were to glance out of the window and suddenly ejaculate, "My, what a beautiful girl!" the superintendent would immediately grab him by the seat of the pantaloons and throw him down the back stairs. And if a member of the American Legion were to sniffle so much as once when the orchestra in the Luna Park dance hall played "Wiener Blut," a spy would seize him by the ear and hurry him before the heads of the organization as a suspicious fellow, in all probability of German blood.

The American is either ashamed of honest emotion or, if he is not ashamed, is soon shamed into shame by his neighbours. He is profoundly affected by any allusion to Mother, the Baby or the Flag—the invincible trinity in American dramatic hokum—and his reactions thereto meet with the full favour of church and state; but he is unmoved, he is silently forbidden to be moved, by a love that doesn't happen to fall into the proper pigeon-hole, by a work of great beauty that doesn't happen to preach a backwoods Methodist sermon, by sheer loveliness, or majesty, or unadorned truth. And this corsetted emotion, mincing, wasp-waisted and furtive, colours the American criticism of drama as it colours all native criticism. It makes the dramatic critic ashamed of simple beauty, and forbids him honestly to admire the mere loveliness of such exhibitions as Ziegfeld's. It makes him ashamed of passion, and forbids him honestly to admire such excellent dramas as Georges de Porto-Riche's "Amoureuse." It makes him ashamed of laughter, and forbids him to chuckle at the little naughtiness of Sacha Guitry and his own Avery Hopwood. It makes him ashamed of truth, and forbids him to regard with approbation such a play as "The Only Law." The American

drama must therefore not create new emotions for him, but must hold the battered old mirror up to his own. It must warm him not with new, splendid and worldly emotions, but must satisfy him afresh as to the integrity and higher merit of his own restricted parcel of emotions. It must abandon all new, free concepts of love and life, of romance and adventure and glory, and must reassure him—with appropriate quiver-music—that the road to heaven is up Main Street and the road to hell down the Avenue de l'Opéra.

Though there is a regrettable trace of snobbery in the statement, it yet remains that—with half a dozen or so quickly recognizable exceptions—the practitioners of dramatic criticism in America are in the main a humbly-born, underpaid and dowdy-lived lot. This was as true of them yesterday as it is today. And as Harlem, delicatessen-store diners, napkin-rings and the Subway are not, perhaps, best conducive to a polished and suavely cosmopolitan outlook on life and romance and enthralling beauty, we have had a dramatic criticism pervaded by a vainglorious homeliness, by a side-street æsthetic, and by not a little of the difficultly suppressed rancour that human nature ever feels in the presence of admired yet unachievable situations. Up to fifteen years ago, drama in America was compelled critically to meet with, and adhere strictly to, the standards of life, culture and romance as they obtained over on Mr. William Winter's Staten Island. Since Winter's death, it has been urged critically to abandon the standards of Staten Island and comply instead with the eminently more sophisticated standards derived from a four years' study of Cicero, Stumpf and the Norwegian system of communal elections at Harvard or Catawba College, combined with a two weeks' stay in Paris. For twenty years, Ibsen and Pinero suffered the American critical cat-o'-nine-tails because they had not been born and brought up in a town with a bust of Cotton Mather or Longfellow in its public square, and did not think quite the

same way about things as Horace Greeley. For twenty years more, Portoriche and Frenchmen like him will doubtless suffer similarly because, in a given situation, they do not act precisely as Frank Munsey or Stuart Pratt Sherman would; for twenty years more, Hauptmann and other Germans will doubtless be viewed with a certain measure of condescension because they have not enjoyed the same advantages as Brander Matthews in buying Liberty Bonds, at par.

American dramatic criticism is, and always has been, essentially provincial. It began by mistaking any cheap melodrama like "The Charity Ball" or "The Wife" which was camouflaged with a few pots of palms and half a dozen dress suits as a study of American society. It progressed by appraising as the dean of American dramatists and as the leading American dramatic thinker a playwright who wrote such stuff as "All over this great land thousands of trains run every day, starting and arriving in punctual agreement because this is a woman's world! The great steamships, dependable almost as the sun—a million factories in civilization—the countless looms and lathes of industry—the legions of labour that weave the riches of the world—all—all move by the mainspring of man's faith in woman!" It has come to flower today in denouncing what the best European critics have proclaimed to be the finest example of American fantastic comedy on the profound ground that "it is alien to American morality," and in hailing as one of the most acute studies of a certain typical phase of American life a comedy filched substantially from the French.

The plush-covered provincialism of the native dramatic criticism, operating in this wise against conscientious drama and sound appreciation of conscientious drama, constantly betrays itself for all the chintz hocus-pocus with which it seeks drolly to conceal that provincialism. For all its easy incorporation of French phrases laboriously culled from the back of Webster, its casually injected allusions to the Überbrett'l, Stan-

islav Pshibuishevsky, the excellent *cuis-sot de Chevreuil sauce poivrade* to be had in the little restaurant near the comfort station in the Place Pigalle, and the bewitching eyes of the prima ballerina in the 1917 Y. M. C. A. show at Epernay, it lets its mask fall whenever it is confronted in the realistic flesh by one or another of the very things against which it has postured its cosmopolitanism. Thus does the mask fall, and reveal the old pair of yokel orbs, before the "indelicacy" of French dramatic masterpieces, before the "polished wit" of British polished witlessness, before the "stodginess" of the German master depictions of stodgy German peasantry, before the "gloom" of Russian dramatic photography, before the "sordidness" of "Countess Julie" and the "wholesomeness" of "The Old Homestead." Cosmopolitanism is a heritage, not an acquisition. It may be born to a man in a wooden shack in Hardin County, in Kentucky, or in a little cottage in Hampshire in England, or in a garret of Paris, but, unless it is so born to him, a thousand Cunard liners and Orient Expresses cannot bring it to him. All criticism is geography of the mind and geometry of the heart. American criticism suffers in that what æsthetic wanderlust its mind experiences is confined to excursion trips, and in that what its heart seeks to discover is an unknown quantity only to emotional sub-freshmen.

Criticism is personal, or it is nothing. Talk to me of impersonal criticism, and I'll talk to you of impersonal sitz-bathing. Impersonal criticism is the dodge of the critic without personality. Some men marry their brother's widow; some earn a livelihood imitating George M. Cohan; some write impersonal criticism. Show me how I can soundly criticize Mrs. Leslie Carter as Hannele without commenting on the mature aspect of the lady's biological *chassis*, and I shall begin to believe that there may be something in the impersonal theory. Show me how I can soundly criticize the drama of Wedekind without analyzing Wedekind, the man, and I shall believe



in the theory to the full. It is maintained by the apostles of the theory that the dramatic critic is in the position of a judge in the court of law: that his concern, like that of the latter, is merely with the evidence presented to him, not with the personalities of those who submit the evidence. Nothing could be more idiotic. The judge who does not take into consideration, for example, that—whatever the nature of the evidence—the average Italian, or negro, or Armenian before him is in all probability lying like the devil is no more equipped to be a sound judge than the dramatic critic who, for all the stage evidence, fails to take into consideration that Strindberg personally was a lunatic, that Pinero, while treating of British impulses and character, is himself of ineradicable Portuguese mind and blood, that the inspiration of D'Annunzio came not from a woman out of life but from a woman out of the greenroom, and that Shaw is a legal virgin.

Just as dramatic criticism, as it is practised in America, is Mason-jar criticism—criticism, that is, obsessed by a fixed determination to put each thing it encounters into its proper bottle and to label it—so is this dramatic criticism itself in turn subjected to the bottling and labeling process. A piece of criticism, however penetrating, that is not couched in the language of the commencement address of the president of Millsaps College, and that fails to include a mention of the Elizabethan theater and a quotation from Victor Hugo's "Hernani," is labeled "journalistic." A criticism that elects to make its points with humour rather than without humour is labeled "flippant." A criticism that shows a wide knowledge of everything but the subject in hand is labeled "scholarly." One that, however empty, prefixes every name with a Mr. and somewhere in it discloses the fact that the critic is sixty-five years old is labeled "dignified." One that is full of hard common sense from beginning to end but is guilty of wit is derogatorily labeled "an imitation of Bernard Shaw." One that says an utterly worthless play

is an utterly worthless play, and then shuts up, is labeled "destructive"; while one that points out that the same play would be a much better play if Hauptmann or De Curel had written it is labeled "constructive and informing." And so it goes. With the result that dramatic criticism in America is a dead art language. Like William Jennings Bryan, it has been criticized to death.

The American mania for being on the popular side has wrapped its tentacles around the American criticism of the theater. The American critic, either because his job depends upon it or because he appreciates that *kudos* in this country, as in no other, is a gift of the mob, sedulously plays safe. A sheep, he seeks the comfortable support of other sheep. It means freedom from alarms, a guaranteed pay envelope at the end of the week, dignity in the eyes of the community, an eventual election to the National Institute of Arts and Letters and, when he reaches three score years and ten and his trousers have become thin in the seat, a benefit in the Century Theater with a bill made up of all the eminent soft-shoe dancers and fat tragediennes upon whom he has lavished praise. This, in America, is the respected critic. If we had amongst us today a Shaw, or a Walkley, or a Boissard, or a Bahr, or a Julius Bab, he would be regarded as not quite nice. Certainly the Drama League would not invite him to appear before it. Certainly he would never be invited to sit between Prof. Richard Burton and Prof. William Lyon Phelps at the gala banquet to D. W. Griffith. Certainly, if his writings got into the paid prints at all, there would be a discreet editor's note at the top to the effect that "the publication of an article does not necessarily imply that it represents the ideas of this publication or of its editors."

Criticism in America must follow the bell-cow. The bell-cow is personal cowardice, artistic cowardice, neighbourhood cowardice, or the even cheaper cowardice of the daily and—to a much lesser degree—periodical press. Up to within a few years ago it was out of

the question for a dramatic critic to write honestly of the productions of David Belasco and still keep his job. One of the leading New York evening newspapers peremptorily discharged its reviewer for daring to do so; another New York newspaper sternly instructed its reviewer not to make the same mistake twice under penalty of being cashiered; a leading periodical packed off its reviewer for the offense. One of the most talented critics in New York was several years ago summarily discharged by the newspaper that employed him because he wrote an honest criticism of a very bad play by an obscure playwright named Jules Eckert Goodman. Another conscientious critic, daring mob opinion at about the same time—he wrote, as I recall, something to the effect that the late Charles Frohman's productions were often very shoddy things—was charily transferred the next day to another post on the newspaper's staff. I myself, plowing my familiar modest critical course, have, indeed, been made not personally unaware of the native editorial horror of critical opinions which are not shared by the Night School curricula, the inmates of the Actors' Home, the Independent Order of B'nai B'rith, the United Commercial Travelers of America, and the Eagles. Some years ago, a criticism of Hall Caine and of his play "Margaret Schiller," which ventured the opinion that the M. Caine was perhaps not one of the greatest of modern geniuses, so frightened the editors of the Philadelphia *North American* and the Cleveland *Leader* that I doubt they have yet recovered from the fear of the consequences of printing the review.

## II

THE dramatic imagination of Augustus Thomas, roughly speaking, falls into two classifications. The first classification is that which has produced works like "Arizona" and "Rio Grande" in which Mr. Thomas has sought to conceal the banality of the old French triangle play by dressing up the charac-

ters in United States military uniforms and naming the back-drop after an American state or precinct. The second is that which has produced works like "As a Man Thinks" and "The Model" in which Mr. Thomas has sought to conceal the banality of the old French triangle play by giving it an overtone of Christian Science, psychoanalysis, hypnotism, idiopathic epilepsy, and veterinary surgery, to say nothing of atavism, thought transference, osteopathy, and the morphology of the sound-transmitting apparatus in caudate amphibia and its phylogenetic significance. His latest work, "Nemesis," comes in the main under the latter classification, for here again is the old Gymnase prosaic husband-young wife-romantic artist triangle tricked out with a false bottom and put over on the customers with much hocus pocus anent psychiatry, the fallibility of finger-print evidence, empirical psychology, psychoneurology and psychozoic phenomena generally, to say nothing of Mr. Thomas' customary further demonstration of cultured ignorance which imposes upon him a sophomoric delight in soberly unloading upon his hearers the results of his somewhat tardy delvings into Epaminondas, Virgil, Dante, De Quincey, Freud and Bernard Shaw.

It is now some fifteen years that Mr. Thomas stopped writing plays and began writing college entrance examinations in dramatic form. His stage exhibits since that time have, with one or two exceptions, seemed like nothing so much as explosions in small town second-hand book stores, littering the neighbourhood with yellowed fragments of the encyclopedias and scientific text books of thirty years ago. It has apparently become impossible for Mr. Thomas to write a simple love scene without learnedly including in it at least one allusion to Gaspar de la Cerda Sandoval Silva y Mendoza, the Pteridææ, or the differential features between melanosis and melanosarcoma. If one of his characters pulls out a revolver, the other promptly comes back at him with a snappy reference to Diphenyltetrach-

lorophthalide or "Tristan and Isolde". If a husband surprises his wife in *flagrante delicto* with her lover, does he land a reverberating boot upon the latter's seat, or run him through the colon, or ruin his nose? He does not. He demolishes the fellow by delivering a twenty-minute address on gastroenterostomy, *Zoologische Forschungsreisen in Australien*, Camille Flammarion, the relative advantages of the use of sodium and potassium hydroxides in the preparation of alkaline pyrogallol, and the financial condition of Gouverneur and Oswegatchie Railroad Company.

"Nemesis" is, in essence, a mixture of Grand Guignol shocker and Brioux propaganda play. It has one admirably written scene—a court-room episode which is in many respects the most observant and penetrating that I have heard in the theater; its melodramatic suspense is adroitly maneuvered; but is otherwise cheap stuff. Mr. Emmet Corrigan, as the husband, seems to have an idea that the most effective way in which to suggest great self-control is to take a deep breath before speaking his lines, and hold it while he is speaking them. Miss Olive Tell and Mr. Pedro de Cordoba give good performances in the respective rôles of wife and lover, and Mr. John Craig is admirable in the brief rôle of the prosecuting attorney.

### III

"Toto" is an adaptation of the French critic Felix Duquesnel's comedy "Patachon," written in collaboration with Maurice Hennequin and originally produced in the Vaudeville, Paris, about fourteen years ago with the agreeable Marthe Regnier in the leading rôle. This rôle has been relegated to second position in the adaptation, that Mr. Leo Ditrichstein may bring to the elaborated star rôle of the gay papa whom the daughter reunites with her puritanical mother his familiar portrait of the indomitable lover. The play in its general outline resembles, save for the manipulation of its denouement, the comedy, "Son Père," by Guinon and Bouchinet,

produced in the Odéon, curiously enough, just a week later, and made known to American audiences a few years afterward in A. E. Thomas' version called "The Rainbow". "Patachon," or "Toto," is mediocre boulevard fare, possessing neither ingenuity nor wit. Its contact with life is negligible.

In "The Ghost Between," an American comedy by Vincent Lawrence, one finds much more merit. For all its crudity, the play brings to light a new playwright with a promising gift of ironic humour and not a little aptitude at setting down traits of character acutely observed. Once he is rid of his traces of amateurishness, this Lawrence should produce genuinely amusing comedy. Arthur Byron again proves himself a fetching comedian in the rôle of the doctor, married to a widow still in love with her first husband, who welcomes a living co-respondent against whom he can put up a tangible amorous fight. Miss Laura Walker plays the rôle of the wife according to her own notion of the manner in which Arthur Hopkins would have directed it; and Glenn Anders plays the rôle of the potential co-respondent according to his own notion of the manner in which George M. Cohan would have directed it.

### IV

THE great American enthusiasm over the genius of Mr. John Drinkwater I find myself, alas, unable to share. My inclination is rather toward the less hysterical English view of the man which appraises him as an amiable and often graceful writer of decidedly mediocre grade. Nor does his latest play, "Mary Stuart," in any way change an opinion previously grounded on his "The Storm," an extremely thin dilution of Synge, "The God of Quiet," an equally thin dilution of Dunsany, with overtones of Robert H. Davis and Perley Poore Sheehan, "A Night of the Trojan War," an obvious piece of sentimentality, and "Abraham Lincoln," a workmanlike theater sure-fire piece written with tact and reserve, but sure-

ly of no sound importance. The local befuddlement as to the eminence of Mr. Drinkwater is due not so much to any authentic talent he may possess as to the fact that he is, at his worst, considerably the superior in talent of the majority of Americans writing for the stage. What has here happened again in the case of Drinkwater has happened in the past, one recalls, in the case of other such Englishmen as Stanley Houghton. But to confuse comparative merit with complete and substantial merit is a little like hailing Horace Annesley Vachell a genius because he is vastly more skilful than George H. Atkinson, O. U. Bean, Thomas Dixon, Peg Franklin and Adeline Leitzbach.

"Mary Stuart" abandons the Mary Stuart of Swinburne, Hume, Björnson, Lang, Schiller, Hewlett and Brantôme—and of history—and presents a Mary Stuart who is a cross between Jane Cowl in "Smilin' Through" and Julia Arthur in "A Lady of Quality." Save for a prologue in the Edward Sheldon manner, the play is fairly well written, though what measure of suave English it vouchsafes does not keep it from being, in the main, dull going. Now and again one anticipates a flash of imagination, but when the flash comes it is found to be as unreal as a capsule of

chemical stage lightning. A reading of the play in book form does not dissipate the impression one gets from having viewed it in the acting performance.

The production of Mr. William Harris, Jr., is generally in excellent taste. Miss Clare Eames is hardly "the lovely, slim girl with skin so transparent they said you could see the red wine go down her throat, and with French manners, dash and charm"—as the press-agent pictures the Mary of history—but presents a well thought out and very dexterously executed, if unconvincingly Esquimaux, performance of the leading rôle.

V

MISS MARGARET ANGLIN's performances of "The Trial of Joan of Arc" and "Iphigenia" again emphasize the manner in which this actress has outstripped all of her American contemporaries in artistic enterprise. I shall have more to say about her excellent work in the near future.

VI

IN "Claire de Lune," by Michael Strange, offered with Ethel and John Barrymore in the chief rôles, I can see utterly nothing.





# Books About Books

By H. L. Mencken

THE Cambridge History of American Literature, which began with a fat volume in 1917 and continued with a still fatter one in 1918, now comes to a triumphant close with two somewhat thin ones. These somewhat thin ones represent the two halves of what was to have been a third and last volume; it evidently grew so inordinately obese that the learned editors had to slice it through the middle. It needs no great fancy to picture them meeting around some secret *Biertisch* in the catacombs of Columbia University, and giving humble thanks to God that their long and harsh labors are over. For harsh is the word, and they hint as much in the preface to their last volume. When they began, I dare say, they thought that a relatively easy job was before them, and one within the talents of any diligent committee—that all they would have to do would be to re-read a couple of standard histories of the national letters, lay out a simple plan, farm out the special subjects to eager colleagues in the one-horse universities, and then close the proceedings with some light copy-reading. If so, they erred grievously, for immediately they tackled the business they discovered that whole sections of the field had never been so much as explored—that the existing treatises upon the subject, one and all, were fragmentary and unilluminating, and that a great deal of pioneer work had to be done if they were to produce a history that was worth a hoot. To this pioneer work they forthwith addressed themselves, with the aid of sixty-four collaborators near and far, and the result now lies before the

*intelligentsia*. That result, it seems to me, is worthy of a great deal of praise. The Cambridge shows many defects, and some of them, as I shall show, are serious, but it is so much better than anything else of the sort that we have that every serious student must needs be thankful for it. It is accurate, it is relatively free from prejudice, and it is so lavishly and intelligently documented that every subsequent inquirer, whether into the main currents of letters or into the remotest backwaters, will have to consult it constantly. If it had no other merit, its bibliographies alone would make it extremely valuable. In the last volume they occupy fully 200 of the 400 odd pages, and to them are added indices that are simple, workable and exhaustive.

The chief defect of the work is a defect in its fundamental plan. In order to avoid getting themselves bogged in a narrative that would involve constant repetitions and retracings of steps, the editors borrowed from the Cambridge History of English Literature the scheme of separating salient authors for individual treatment, and of grouping the lesser lights according to the sort of letters they chiefly practised. Thus there is a whole chapter of Mark Twain, but all the minor humorists of the period since the Civil War, from Charles Godfrey Leland to George Ade, Finley Peter Dunne and F. P. Adams, are bunched together in one essay. In the same way there is an essay dealing with all the essayists since Mitchell and Curtis, another discussing the short story writers since Harte, another on the novelists since Harriet Beecher Stowe, another on the

latter-day dramatists, and others on the historians, theologians, political writers, pedagogues and philosophers, always with the first-rate men, if any, reserved for special treatment. This system has plain advantages. It insures simplicity and clarity, and it makes possible something approaching a classification of authors according to their importance. But it has the disadvantage of erecting distinctions that are often far more bibliographical than critical, and of obscuring general movements that are far more significant than the work of individual men, or even of whole categories of men. For example, there was the movement against the Puritan (and especially New England) hegemony which got under way in Chicago in the middle 90's—a movement that was a mere offshoot, perhaps, of the simultaneous Great Awakening that went on in England, but nevertheless one that quickly took on a purely national color and exerted a tremendous influence upon the entire subsequent course of letters in America. It would be difficult, indeed, to over-estimate its importance. Practically every first-rate American author of today owes his existence to it, and if not his actual existence, then at least his recognition. Without it there would have been no Dreiser, no Huxley, no George Ade, no band of new poets, no Little Theatre. Once and for all time it broke the paralyzing hold of the blue-nose upon the national literature, and opened the way for a genuine nationalism. When Herbert S. Stone and his crowd set up the *Chapbook* the test of a new work was whether it could be read aloud by a circle of old maids in a New England college town—whether it would interest and edify such a *Kaffeeklatsch* of miserable, God-forsaken half-wits; when, a few years later, Stone put up his shutters, the test was whether the thing accurately and intelligently represented the life that normal, typical Americans were actually living in the world.

Obviously, such a revolution de-

serves full-length treatment in any work that pretends to recite the history of the national letters. How, precisely, did it come to pass? Who were Stone and his friends, and what was the origin of their ideas? What were their relations to the men of the 90's in England, and to the earlier revolutionists in Paris and Berlin? And what were the steps connecting them, say, with such disparate men as Frank Norris and Dreiser on the one hand, and Lindsay and Sandburg on the other? Unluckily, there is nothing about the matter in the Cambridge—that is, no connected and illuminating discussion. I find, indeed, no mention of it at all, save vaguely and incidentally. Stone is not listed in the index; Henry B. Fuller is barely named; Dreiser appears only as a writer of one-act plays! This last absurdity is due primarily to the group-system that I have mentioned. The author of the chapter on the later drama brings his narrative down to 1918, but Carl Van Doren, who discusses the novel, stops with 1900, as all the contributors to the four volumes are supposed to stop. All the same, he might have at least squeezed in a line or two about "Sister Carrie," for he has room for Owen Wister's "The Virginian," which was not published until 1905, and mentions books by Jack London of as late a date as 1913. It is hard to believe that this exclusion of Dreiser is deliberate, for though the other editors of the Cambridge, and particularly Prof. Dr. Stuart P. Sherman, might be guilty of so thumping an absurdity, certainly Van Doren is above it; he knows very well, indeed, that Dreiser is four times as important as London and at least forty times as important as Wister. No doubt the plan of the work is to blame. It produces a similar defect in the case of Ambrose Bierce. He is listed among the writers of short stories and his qualities are very accurately described, but his astounding talents as a maker of epigrams—unquestionably he was the greatest artist in that department that America has

ever produced—are not so much as mentioned. Nor is there the slightest reference to the extremely important rôle that he played in the post-Harted-and-Twain literary movement in California, where the Bierce tradition, to this day, is almost as vivid as the Emerson tradition in New England. I am no Biercianer, but it seems to me that there is something lacking in a history of American literature which offers a detailed study of F. Marion Crawford, and dismisses old Ambrose with a few colorless lines, leaving his chief work unmentioned.

Here, then, is the chief defect of the work: it carries pigeon-holing so far that the larger groups are often broken up, and their movements thus become unintelligible. I state the fact without invidious intent. The editors had to choose between two things: either they could attempt a philosophical study of the influences lying under the development of letters in America, or they could simply assemble, classify and present the materials for such a study. They chose the latter course, and to the execution of their purpose they brought a tremendous diligence and learning and a great deal of sound discretion. One thing that handicapped them greatly, once they had chosen, was the lack of competent assistance. The editors of the *Cambridge History of English Literature* had the aid of such brilliant scholars as Saintsbury, and in consequence they produced a work of fine graces as well as of sound learning; the editors of the *American History* had to be content, in the main, with collaborators of no distinction whatsoever—obscure and tedious schoolmasters, wholly incompetent to make their discourse charming. There are, in the last two volumes, some atrociously bad chapters—for example, that of Percy H. Boynton on "Patriotic Songs and Hymns" and that of Harry Morgan Ayres on "The English Language in America." There were even worse chapters in the first two volumes, notably the Hon. Henry Cabot Lodge's vacillating and nonsen-

sical discussion of Daniel Webster. But alongside these bad things there are also some very good ones—for example, the essays on Emerson and Jonathan Edwards by Paul Elmer More, that on Henry James by Joseph Warren Beach, and, above all, that of Woodbridge Riley on "Popular Bibles" and that of Samuel Lee Wolff on American scholars. Even the chapter on Mark Twain by Sherman shows a good deal of sense. Sherman, basically, is quite unable to comprehend Mark; he can't get over his pious horror of "The Mysterious Stranger" and "What is Man?"; Van Wyck Brooks might have written a chapter infinitely more valuable. Nevertheless, Sherman holds himself in very neatly, and, save for a few banalities, is judicious and instructive.

Well, here are the materials; who, now, will write the history? Properly done, it would be more than a mere study of authors and their books; it would be a full-length treatise upon the evolution of the American mind. Such a treatise has never been attempted. No one has ever sought intelligently to trace out the origin and development of the ideas which enter into the fundamental thinking of the American people. By what route, for example, were they rid of their old spirit of liberty, so that the most ardent guardians of personal and political freedom in the whole world became converted in less than a century into a race of grovelling conformists, docile and pliant in the face of almost any imaginable invasion of their constitutional rights? The first great political contest in the United States was over an attempt to violate the Bill of Rights, and those who made the attempt were destroyed with yells. But today a Federal judge would probably order his catchpolls to duck any barrister who so much as mentioned the Bill of Rights; there are men in jail today whose sole intelligible offense is that they publicly demanded that it be observed. Another thing that deserves investigation is the decay of academic

dignity and freedom in the Republic. Compare the principles enunciated in Emerson's famous address on "The American Scholar" with the principles now put into practise by such drovers of pedagogues as Dr. Butler of Columbia: the contrast is really quite gruesome. Yet again, there is the rise of Comstockery. Finally, there is the great proliferation of "inspirational" piffle. It is evidently an end-product of New England Transcendentalism, as are Christian Science, the New Thought and all other such schemes to talk down reality. But what were the intervening steps? Here are questions that concern the historian of the national literature. He cannot deal with that literature illuminatingly unless he shows the play of general ideas underlying it. . . . I point to the job, but do not nominate the candidate.

## II

A GOOD many smaller volumes of literary criticism appear together: "A New England Group and Others," by Paul Elmer More (*Houghton*); "American English," by Gilbert M. Tucker (*Knopf*); "Aspects of Literature," by J. Middleton Murry (*Knopf*); "The Invisible Censor," by Francis Hackett (*Huebsch*); "Poetic Origins and the Ballad," by Louise Pound (*Macmillan*); "The Battle of the Books," by Anne Elizabeth Burlingame (*Huebsch*); "Life and Letters," by J. C. Squire (*Doran*), and "Essays on Modern Novelists," by William Lyon Phelps (*Macmillan*).

"The Battle of the Books" is a valuable study, but rather too pedantic to be reviewed in this place. What it attempts to do is to trace the emancipation of scholarship in England from the classical tradition in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. It was a long and a hard fight, but in the end the romantics beat the Paul Elmer Mores. Dr. Phelps' volume on the dramatists includes essays upon Barrie, Shaw, Galsworthy, Clyde Fitch, Maeterlinck and Rostand. There is, to my

taste, rather too much enthusiasm in it; I cannot bring myself to believe that Barrie is a more important dramatist than Shaw, or to subscribe to the doctrine that Maeterlinck is "the foremost living writer in the world." The truth is that Maeterlinck's day is quite done; not even the women's clubs take him seriously any longer. His prose, I grant you, has a certain mellifluousness, but the ideas in it are almost indistinguishable from those exposed in the evening newspapers by Dr. Frank Crane. If Maurice is the foremost living writer in the world, then Frank is the foremost living writer in the United States—which judgment, indeed, Maurice actually emitted during his late visit to the Republic. I presume to dispute it, with all due respect. As for the Maeterlinckian plays they are mainly so childish that one is not surprised to hear a confession from Dr. Phelps that even he, witnessing one of them acted, has guffawed like a Southern Methodist at the slow roasting of a blackamoor. Put the best of them beside any play by Lord Dunsany and you will begin to realize what an abyss separates a clever mountebank from a serious artist. Maeterlinck's one intelligible drama is "Monna Vanna"—a tinpot melodrama of the Sardou brand, fit only to be set to music by some street-piano Italian. Dr. Phelps reveals a piece of literary news: one of the best ideas in the play was borrowed from Robert Browning's "Luria." I don't doubt it. . . . In his other chapters the learned doctor yields less to *Schwärmerei*; in all of them, whether he yields or doesn't yield, he is extremely well-informed and amusing. His chapter on Clyde Fitch is especially interesting, for he and Fitch went to school together and remained life-long friends, and so he knew more about the dramatist's inner yearnings than most. Fitch was almost the perfect artisan. There was no man of his time who could give a better show in the theatre, and always he did it within the limits of good taste. But when he essayed to be pro-



found, he nearly always became absurd; the talent for currying the diaphragm, as opposed to the mere epidermis, was simply not in him. I believe that his influence upon the latter-day American drama has been much under-estimated, both as to its value and as to its extent. What he learnt abroad, especially in France and Germany, he taught to all his imitators, and American playwriting is the better for it. He brought the drama of Broadway into close contact with the life of his time. He got rid of many ancient conventions and platitudes. What Tom Robertson did back in the 60's Fitch did again forty years later, and he did it much better.

Hackett's "The Invisible Censor" and Squire's "Life and Letters" cover much the same ground. That is to say, both volumes present the reactions of a professional critic of letters, but to life itself rather than to books. The superiority of Hackett's work is instantly visible. He not only writes far better than Squire; he is a much more shrewd, well-informed and amusing man. The best thing in Squire's book consists of two diatribes against George Meredith, in which his affectations are ruthlessly exposed and denounced. I am inclined to think that the business is carried a bit too far—that Squire often blames the cheap intellectual and social snob for the crimes of the artist, and that sometimes they are not crimes at all, but merely harmless waggeries. Nevertheless, there is force in some counts of the indictment, and the statement of them should treat the more fanatical Meredithians to a salubrious catharsis. But the book as a whole is frankly third-rate, as Squire is himself. His criticism is simply rough-and-ready journalism, and the ideas at the heart of it are indistinguishable from the banal principles cherished by all other right-thinking men. J. Middleton Murry is of finer metal—less the journalist than the journalizing don. His "Aspects of Literature" is a book full of suave notions suavely set forth—but there is

certainly nothing very original in it, or very startling otherwise. A hundred other dons, if they took pen in hand, would produce almost precisely the same thing. It is correct, it is sober, it is elegant, it is thoughtful—but it lacks the spark, it fails to flame.

### III

PAUL ELMER MORE'S "A New England Group" offers simply one more solemn statement—the eleventh in the order of the Shelburne Essays of his familiar ideas. More is the Bourbon of criticism in These States: he never learns anything and he never forgets anything. Let hell bubble and Rome howl: he sticks to his guns. What occupies him primarily is a war that was fought to a finish, with both sides fearfully beaten, fully a century ago, to wit, the historic war between the classicists and the romantics. His side is that of the classicists (which he constantly identifies with that of the New England blue-noses), and to the business of supporting it he brings a learning fit for a German professor and a diligence beyond compare. The new roaring that goes on in the world of letters does not reach his ears; he knows nothing about all the wild movements of the moment, and cares less. So far as his books offer any evidence, he has never heard of Dreiser and the Dreiser following, or of Amy Lowell and her janissaries, or of George Bernard Shaw, or of any of the new novelists in England, or even of Joseph Conrad, Thomas Hardy or George Moore, or even, God help us all, of Ibsen. The only living authors mentioned in his index are Arthur Symonds, W. B. Yeats, Henry Holt, Viscount Morley and Ernest Poole. The Goths and the Huns are at the gate, but More is deaf to them. High above the gory battlements whereon the artists of forty schools fight, slay and devour one another, he sits in an ivory tower reinforced with steel and concrete, and there shut off from the world he piles up his monumental proofs that there is

"peril in following the electric thrill of freer feeling" and that what man needs most is order, restraint, discipline, the goose-step. There is no boyish curiosity in him, no sneaking desire to go out and take a hand in the current row, no lust for mere combat. His method is wholly judicial, scientific, *ex parte*. Year after year he goes on reiterating the faith that is in him, seldom so much as changing a word.

So much for his principles. In detail, of course, he occasionally ventures upon a novelty. This time it takes the form of a strange politeness to the late Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, the scoundrel who plotted the Great War twenty-five years ago, and then launched it suddenly fourteen years after his own death, to the colossal surprise of the French War Office and the British Admiralty, neither of which suspected that anything of the sort was afoot. Ten years ago More had many harsh things to say about Nietzsche, in whom he discerned a lingering romantic, by Wagner out of the Chopin waltzes; now he salutes and almost embraces the brute. Well, perhaps it is not so astonishing, after all. Wasn't it Nietzsche who said "Be hard!"? And isn't this, at bottom, the substance of the Morean aesthetic? More, I suspect, misunderstood Nietzsche in those first days (as, indeed, I presumed to tell him at the time); now he knows better. At all events, he gives the Prussian Antichrist a very courtly bow, and even forgets to blame him for causing the war, to the surprise, as I have said, of the French War Office and the British Admiralty, not to mention the Russian Foreign Office. . . . Even stranger than this new flirtation with Nietzsche is a long (and, I regret to report, rather flabby) chapter on the adventures of the venerable Henry Holt among ghosts. Here, of course, More is a bit cautious. "No doubt," he says, "there has been a vast amount of deliberate deception in the table-turning and other so-called mediumistic phenomena." Nevertheless, the combined effect of so much evidence, even

though it be dubious in severalty, is powerful, and there remains "a residue of facts which cannot be accounted for by the ordinary faculties." But even so, the strangeness is not wholly strange. Didn't Jonathan Edwards believe in witches, and wasn't he "the greatest theologian and philosopher yet produced in this country"? Assuming that man has an immortal soul—a gaseous part that resists both the metabolism of the worm and the hot coals of the crematory—, isn't it reasonable to assume further that this soul may occasionally long to tread its old paths on the earth, and that, so long as it may make the attempt? The first assumption is certainly one that no defender of the New England enlightenment can reject. Jonathan Edwards not only believed in witches; he also believed in souls, and in spooks to boot. Thus it is not surprising to find More disinclined to flout the last-named. He warns Mr. Holt to be careful and upbraids him for certain romantic generalizations, but is quite willing to allow a high dignity to his quest.

This More is a man who always entertains me. I couldn't imagine a man whose ideas stood at great variance with the prejudices and superstitions that I personally cherish, but I always forget his specific notions in admiring the pertinacity with which he holds and maintains them. The vacillating type of man, believing one thing this year and the contrary next year, and always ready to be converted back and forth—this fellow I dislike intensely. I dislike him most when he flops suddenly to my side, and so embarrasses me with a fiery enthusiasm for ideas that I always mix with doubts. More will never flop. With his last gasp he will cry out against "the electric thrill of freer feeling" and declare anew his immovable belief in a moral order of the world.

#### IV

DR. POUND's book on the ballad is under heavy fire from the pedagogues,

and no wonder, for it completely disposes of the theory upon which nine-tenths of all the pedagogical discussions of the ballad and its origins are based. That is the theory that the ballads familiar to all of us—for example, "Chevy Chase" and "Lord Bateman"—are the product, not of individual authors, but of whole herds of minnesingers working together, and that most of them came into being during dance ceremonies—in brief, that the primitive balladists first joined in a communal hoofing, than began to moan and hum a tune, and finally fitted words to it. It is difficult to imagine anything more idiotic, and yet this doctrine is cherished as something almost sacred by whole droves of professors and rammed annually into the skulls of innumerable candidates for the Ph.D. degree. Dr. Pound proves by the analogy of the customs observed among existing savages and barbarians, and by ordinary common sense no less, that the ballads really did not originate in that way at all—that they were written, on the contrary, by individual poets with talents as far above those of the populace as the talents of the late J. Gordon Cooglar, say, were above those of the average Carolinian, and that most of them first saw the light, not at vulgar shindigs on the village green, but at fashionable and even intellectual ale-parties in castle halls. To me, at least, her proofs seem to be overwhelming. I accept them forthwith, and shall continue to believe in them until their opponents bring up some evidence against them that is more impressive than the current chirping.

The notion that any respectable work of art can have a communal origin is probably wholly nonsensical. The plain people, taking them together, are quite as incapable of a coherent æsthetic impulse as they are of courage, honesty or honor. The cathedrals of the middle ages were not planned and built by whole communities, but by

individual men; all the communities had to do with the business was to do the hard work, reluctantly and often badly. So with folk-song, folk-myth, folk-balladry. The fable of Adam and Eve in the Garden was not invented by the ancient Jews as a people, bit by bit, slowly and painfully; it was composed *in toto* on some fair morning by some long-forgotten Babylonian O. Henry, just as *Gefühlte Fisch* was invented centuries later by some cook of brilliant gifts; all the Jews did was to adopt both fable and dish—and spoil both. German folk-song, the loveliest in the world, had precisely the same sort of origin. It used to be credited to a mysterious native talent in the German yokelry, but scientific investigation quickly revealed the fact that some of the songs regarded as especially characteristic of the folk-soul were actually written by the director of music at the University of Tübingen, Prof. Dr. Friedrich Silcher, and that he was still alive so recently as 1860. The English ballads are to be accounted for in the same way. Miss Pound shows that some of the most famous of them, in their earliest forms, are full of concepts and phrases that would have been as incomprehensible to the English peasantry of Elizabeth's time as the Ehrlich hypothesis of immunity—that it is a sheer impossibility to imagine them being composed by a gang of oafs whooping and galloping around a Maypole, or even assembled solemnly in an *Eisteddfod* or *Allgemeinesängerfest*. More, she shows the process of ballad making in our own time—how a song by a Paul Dresser or a Stephen Foster is borrowed by the folk, and then gradually debased. Her work is extraordinarily learned, and yet the writing is clear and entertaining. It is a capital example of what scholarship might be in America if there were more of her acute intelligence among our scholars and less of the ponderous mummery of sorcerers and corn-doctors.

